

TOWARDS A COMMITTED MUSICOLOGY

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PREFACECommitments, Intentions, Method.

The motivation which has produced this thesis is common to no more than a small minority of musicologists. It is produced out of a sense that most music-making and discussion of music today is oblivious of contradictory and alienating social conditions, as though anything to do with music were somehow exempt from a relationship to society. The most central question for these few musicologists is: how can the study of music be reconciled to a commitment to social change? In the investigation of the possibility for a 'committed' musicology, it is the nature of the relationship of music to society which needs to be coherently theorized.

The theoretical framework within which I have worked is historical materialism. I have therefore based my argument on elementary premises about the nature of human activity, and from these I have worked outwards, considering in turn Karl Marx's economic theory, the relation of ideology to material processes (Chapter I), the relation of aesthetics to ideology (Chapter II), the relation of contemporary musicology to ideology (Chapter III), and finally, the implications of a Marxist aesthetic for an alternative musicology (Chapter IV). Although I have proceeded from the material to the cultural levels of society, I have avoided the strictly deductive logic and the rigidity of definition which makes the discourse of much academic research today inflexibly linear. My method has more often been to start from certain key questions in the fields of social, aesthetic and musical theory, and then to outline some of the most important debates which have arisen in response to them. This method

leads to some repetition at the points where these spheres of interest overlap, but, in sounding out the multiplicity of contradictory possibilities for musicology today, it is more appropriate to the dialectical method which characterizes historical materialism.

The content of this thesis, except when specifically indicated in the text, is my own original work.

INTRODUCTION.Human Activity - the Infrastructure.

Music is a human activity and as such it is a social phenomenon, integrally related to all other aspects of society. Societies do not exist before people - they are produced by people in active engagement with their environment. The most fundamental human activity caters to the satisfaction of basic needs (e.g. for food and shelter), and the exact nature of this activity depends on the degree to which the forces of material production are developed at that historical moment, i.e. the degree to which natural resources and technical skills are available for the production of the goods required to subsist. The process by which people produce what they need and the way in which they distribute their products establishes a relationship between such people, and the combination of these social relations and the productive forces in relation to which they develop is called a 'mode of production':

Forces of production + Social relations of production  
= Mode of production

Societies are complex, and while it is likely that more than one mode of production may co-exist, most societies have exhibited a dominant social relationship in which a few people have controlled the means of production, i.e. the available raw materials and the instruments of production. This control has placed these people in a position of power as the ruling class (e.g. the aristocracy in feudal times), and, in using their power to maintain their control, they have exploited subservient classes. In most Western countries today, the dominant mode of production is capitalism,

in which the means of production is owned by a small class of capitalists as the result of a long history of inheritance, appropriation and centralization.

In terms of Marx's analysis of the dynamics of capitalism, products are exchanged on the basis of the amount of abstract labour embodied in them and this exchange-value characterizes them as 'commodities'. Commodities are exchanged, not for their immediate use-value, but for the purposes of accumulating capital. In the capitalist mode of production, labour-power itself is commoditized, its price being determined by the cost of the daily subsistence of labourers, which is paid to them as 'wages'. Because of the advantage of their ownership of the means of production, capitalists appropriate the products of labour and then sell them. They accumulate capital as a result of the difference between the value of labour-power as expressed in the wages they pay and the value of labour as embodied in the appropriated products. This difference is called 'surplus-value'. The labour which produces surplus-value is therefore unpaid: it is surplus labour. Capitalists continually attempt to maximize surplus labour by extending working hours, expanding and centralizing production and developing productivity through co-operative labour and mechanization. Today, the accumulation and centralization of capital through its continual re-investment has led to the development of powerful monopolies which frequently antagonize those labour organizations such as trade unions which represent the interests of the exploited labouring class.

The drive for productivity through mechanization has led to a decrease in the ratio between capital spent on labour and that spent on the means of

production, with a consequent decrease in the proportion of surplus-value accrued. This is a contradiction which is central to capitalism, and, together with the fact that production is planned with accumulation and not consumption in mind, contributes to the recurrence of economic 'crises'. Our economy has the potential to produce a higher general standard of living, but this potential will not be fulfilled until the current domination of the means of production by capital is overcome, for capitalist social relations fetter the development of those very productive forces which make such a standard of living possible.

These essential processes are often concealed in mystified appearances by an illusory understanding which Marx characterized as 'ideology'. For example, surplus-value is seen as 'profit', arising naturally in the difference between cost-price and selling price. The privileges of the ruling class also appear to be 'natural'. Such distortions as these, which obscure the 'contradictory and alienating social conditions' of capitalism, must be dispelled before musicology can formulate a relationship between music and society. If at this point it appears that economic theory is unrelated to musical concerns, then it needs to be re-emphasized that music is a social phenomenon and does not exist in a vacuum. In the same way as Marx described commodities as 'fetishized' when they are seen to have a life of their own, independent of the human relationships in which they are produced, so music is fetishized if it is not seen in relation to all social activities.

## I. THE SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND IDEOLOGY.

### 1). The Ideological.

History is not static - it is a process, and this idea is central to the mainstream of Marxist thought, which has systematically attempted to develop a theory of historical change, its primary objective being revolutionary practice. This attempt has been characterized by an awareness that men are situated in social relationships according to the method by which they provide for their needs through labour, and that the nature of these social relations is a product of the degree to which the forces of production are developed. Social change is therefore seen to occur when the techniques with which men engage in production have developed to such a level as to render the relations of production inappropriate and restrictive.

Because of the fundamental nature of labour in human activity, the availability of productive forces and the consequent relations of production constitute an economic 'base' to society. It is a primary principle of historical materialism that this 'base' is of ultimate significance in determining the nature of society in general. This principle has been conceptualized by several writers in a two-tiered model consisting of a 'base' ('infrastructure') and 'superstructure', the latter including political, legal, religious, educational and other cultural phenomena (including musical production). This model is only of value in its use as a tool of analysis, and it loses its significance if it is rigidly polarized. It is important to be aware of the limitations of the concept of 'superstructure' because of its lack of specificity. The social 'base' determines a wide spectrum of phenomena ranging from those which are most directly determined, e.g. political institutions, to such cultural phenomena as art, which are difficult to relate directly to economic factors.

Furthermore, while it cannot be denied that consciousness is an element of all superstructural phenomena, it should be understood that there are superstructural institutions which have a concrete material existence and which perform an infrastructural function by mediating between the economic base of society and those 'elevated' forms of consciousness such as are manifested in ideas and the imagination. This is not to suggest that there is any significant degree to which consciousness (as it crystallizes in institutions) determines itself at a higher level. For example, individual consciousness is nurtured and shaped in educational institutions, which, because of their relation to the social base, tend to directly prepare students for their roles in the economy; yet one can neither conclude that an individual's education is necessarily 'determined' by the mode of economic production in society nor that mere educational reform will bring about changes in individual consciousness. Consciousness is materially produced, as is the rest of the superstructure, but it is not accurate to equate superstructure exclusively with consciousness, for example by implying a parallel between the 'base/superstructure' model and Marx's dictum that social being determines consciousness. Social being - the collectivity of social actions and relations - is a product of all material processes, economic and superstructural, and it is this total infrastructure which in the last instance determines the nature of consciousness.

A second fundamental theoretical principle of Marxism is that of the 'dialectic', which Marx derived from Hegel but applied in a materialist rather than an idealist framework. This principle suggests that historical phenomena are not simple, inert and one-dimensional, but that they represent the dynamic interpenetration of contradictory poles. 'Dialectical'

does not imply a polarized duality; it is a unity of opposites, a continuum extending between poles. For example, although the economic base of society is seen as ultimately determining superstructural phenomena, the latter also play a complementary role in determining the social infrastructure, including the economic base (for example to the extent that consciousness influences or organizes labour, which in itself is an economic force of production). Social being, then, is constituted by the 'dialectical' interaction of the infrastructural and superstructural levels of society. A dialectic, however, is more than a mere interaction, for it is also an interaction which moves towards some form of resolution. At any historical moment, a dialectic exists within a social structure between those 'de-structive' functions which aim to explode the contradictions within society, and those social functions which serve to maintain the structure as it is. After all, social structures are not only 'produced' - they are also 're-produced' and have a relative stability. In the history of society, social contradictions are 'overcome' through a dialectical process of integration into a new social structure, but such a synthesis is not achieved without the development of new, historically related contradictions, setting up a new dialectic. For this reason, history must always be seen as a dynamic process of change.

In historical materialism, the vital concept which relates to the maintenance of social relations as they are is 'ideology', which is seen to have two crucial elements. Firstly, ideology conceals real social processes in illusory appearances, and secondly, because of this mystification, ideology is reproductive, i.e. it serves to reproduce the social structure as it is. For example, traditional economic theory often describes economic processes as 'natural', beyond human powers of control, and this is 'ideological' because it has the effect of removing the theoretical

possibility for different economic relationships to be established. The real process of the extortion of surplus-value in the labour process is also concealed in a mystified appearance - the 'natural' origin of 'profit'. Ideology permeates every level of a society's attempt to reproduce the mode of production which maintains the social advantage of the ruling class (i.e. its ownership of the means of production): law and legal theory, financial controls and labour regulation, public education, and even official religion (including public morality, e.g. the 'work ethic'). It is a primary objective of this paper to assess the ideological import of musicology today.

An ideological function can be performed in practice, e.g. by actively preaching the values of the status quo in education, but essentially it is expressed in a way of perceiving, a mode of consciousness. This ideological consciousness is described by some Marxists as 'false consciousness'. Consciousness is said to be 'false' when it fails to penetrate beyond the appearances of phenomena and to reveal the reality of conditions (especially where this reality is inherently contradictory, as it is in capitalism). False consciousness therefore sets itself false problems, and its arguments are circular, presenting false solutions. Terry Eagleton, drawing on the work of Louis Althusser, describes such consciousness as 'curving back on itself', having no outside.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore not contradictory in itself, he says, and he and Althusser reject the term 'false consciousness' because for them ideology represents a 'lived relation' with material reality which is subjectively valid, experienced as 'true'. At the surface, this is a fine distinction, and it is clearly the task of the Marxist critic to discern the exact nature of the false perceptions which give ideological experiences their validity.

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1. Terry Eagleton, Criticism and Ideology (London: Verso, 1978): p. 95.

The dominance in a society of ideological functions can be described as a 'hegemony' which gives to that society its current form and security. Capitalist institutions and cultural phenomena tend to preserve capitalist relations as they are, to the obvious benefit of the capitalist class. But, as already demonstrated, capitalism is not free from contradictions, and it is of particular interest to the Marxist to know how 'non-ideological' functions may grow out of the contradictions inherent within capitalism. Which institutions and phenomena, or which manifestations of consciousness threaten the hegemony of the ruling class?

One might ask whether there are not superstructural institutions or cultural phenomena which promote neither social stasis nor change. Such a neutral category does not exist, for that which sets out neither to promote change nor stasis in effect promotes stasis, i.e. it performs an ideological function, for nothing occurs in a social vacuum. The dichotomy between 'ideological' and 'non-ideological' functions should not be seen as an hypostatized duality, for it is possible that the same phenomenon should perform both functions by affirming some values of the status quo and by negating others. It is therefore a task of this paper, for example, to discern the exact nature of this dialectic within musicology. Above all, ideology is not an abstract category; it relates to concrete living, to the concrete effects of some modes of thought and action, and as such it is in itself a social process.

2). The Non-ideological.

Historical materialism demonstrates that human consciousness tends ultimately to be a function of material social structures, and that these structures are perpetuated by ideology. In developing a theory of revolutionary practice, however, it is necessary to understand how the contradictions in the material base of the capitalist structure give rise to non-ideological possibilities. A theory that is premised on the assumption that social structures are changeable also assumes that consciousness is not totally ideological and that man is capable of redirective activity in response to prevailing conditions. This is to say that in the dialectical relationship between man and society, man constitutes an historical Subject in relation to society, as well as being the Object of social mediation.

There is some controversy amongst Marxists over the extent to which man can be seen as the Subject of history, but it is agreed that there is no category of man, as in bourgeois humanism, which exists prior to or independently of social being. Furthermore, Marxists agree that it is not 'individuals' who constitute the historical Subject. People who occupy similar roles in society in relation to the means of production constitute 'classes', which, as supra-individual collectivities, embody the common needs, desires and actions of individuals. Marxists therefore tend to use the term 'class consciousness' in relation to ideology, and are not concerned with individual consciousness in this respect. It is difficult to assess the status of individuals in the work of Marx himself, for although he distinguished between their social and natural existence as he did between a commodity and a product, most of his analysis was concerned with man's interaction with his environment, as in Capital, and

was indifferent to individuals except as they personify social forces. For Marx, it was class consciousness that was significant: that of the ruling class for its ideological content, and that of the working class for its non-ideological content, the latter being derived from the workers' close contact with the productive process in which they were exploited.

The notion of an historical Subject has been challenged in recent years by a school of Marxists influenced by Louis Althusser, who holds that to see any practice as occurring outside of ideology is to the detriment of scientific rigour. Althusser presents a 'scientific' alternative: knowledge, he claims, can only be achieved by Science. Victor Molina has claimed that in his attempt to de-hypostatize the notion of the historical Subject, Althusser was merely positing an "a-humanistic" attitude, similar to Marx's indifference to individuals in Capital.<sup>1</sup> But in this attempt, Althusser has hypostatized the concepts of science and ideology. He firmly distinguishes science from ideology, which he sees as a general category and which is "essential to the historical life of societies".<sup>2</sup> "There is no practice except by and in an ideology" is the thesis which arises from Althusser's theory,<sup>3</sup> suggesting that consciousness, as it determines action, necessarily forms a level of the existing social structure, supporting that structure and giving it coherence in the experience of individuals. I suggest that this theory of ideology is peculiarly undialectical, as is Althusser's notion of science. If science lies outside ideology, then who are the knowers of the knowledge which science attains :

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1. Victor Molina, "Notes on Marx and the Problem of Individuality", On Ideology, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (London: Hutchinson, 1977): p. 244.
  2. Louis Althusser, For Marx (London: Allen Lane, 1969): p. 232.
  3. Gregor McLennan, Victor Molina and Roy Peters, "Althusser's Theory of Ideology", On Ideology, p. 96.

individuals whose lives are asocial, non-material? Althusser's conception of science is absolute, ahistorical in its autonomy from all social determinations. Furthermore, it has repercussions on his theory of ideology, for the latter fails to account for revolutionary practice, or for what I have described as 'non-ideological' functions. Essentially, Althusser fails to account for historical change: in his work history is not a process - it is static - and man appears to be helpless, passive. The limited value of his work lies in its insistence on 'scientificity' and in its caution against ahistorical subjectivism, but both of these features are already built into historical materialism, whereas Althusser's un-dialectical epistemology is actually a betrayal of a central Marxist tradition, and renders his work ahistorical in itself.

In the 'Critical Theory' of Marxists of the Frankfurt School, it is not the individual Subject but, as in Marx, a "supra-individual Subject"<sup>1</sup> which is emphasized in its dialectical relation to historical processes. The Frankfurt School strove to restore a humanist dialectic to the orthodox Marxism of the 1920s and 1930s, which mechanically interpreted consciousness as a direct reflection of material processes. At the same time they broke with the excesses of bourgeois liberal humanism (e.g. the typical mistake of defining the proletariat by its suffering rather than by its role in socio-economic processes). In Critical Theory, the historical Subject is a

. . . definite individual in his real relation to other individuals and groups, in his conflict with a particular class, and, finally, in the resultant web of relationships with the social totality and with nature.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Martin Jay, The Dialectical Imagination (London: Heinemann, 1973): p. 177.
  2. Max Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory", Critical Theory: Selected Essays (New York: The Seabury Press, 1972): p. 211.

Such a Subject is the premise of a truly dialectical historical materialist theory of ideology.

The 'critical' position of the Frankfurt School's theory requires some notion of a social Ideal - 'humanity' realized - against which reality can be measured. In Marxism, this Ideal is the removal of all contradictions which are based on class struggles by establishing a 'classless society'. To Marx himself, and to such orthodox Marxists as Gyorgy Lukács, the class consciousness of the proletariat embodied this future truth as a result of the proletariat's 'emergent' role in history. But it is a central and necessary paradox in the work of the Critical Theorists, that, while appealing optimistically through their 'critique' to a Utopian image, they have also given cause for pessimism by clearly demonstrating the extent to which the relative autonomy of individuals is being progressively annihilated in modern capitalist society because consciousness (including that of the proletariat) is becoming increasingly reified, commoditized by the 'culture industry'. All consciousness - and even the subjective impulses of individuals - is becoming part of planned culture. In Herbert Marcuse's phrase, society and individuals are becoming "one-dimensional". In their book Dialectic of Enlightenment, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer present an excessively bleak impression of the mass deception achieved by the culture industry :

The most intimate reactions of human beings have been so thoroughly reified that the idea of anything specific to themselves now persists only as an utterly abstract notion.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Max Horkheimer and T.W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, trans. J. Cumming (London: Allen Lane, 1944): p. 167.

In its failure to suggest any critical potential in consciousness or culture, this is perhaps exaggerated:

Freedom to choose an ideology - since ideology always reflects economic coercion - everywhere proves to be freedom to choose what is always the same.<sup>1</sup>

Undoubtedly, this needs to be read in the light of the writers' experience of Fascism, and its value lies in appreciating the enormity of the obstacle which revolutionary practice faces in advanced capitalism.

It is necessary to note that Herbert Marcuse, especially in his later work, had a different relationship to revolutionary practice from Adorno and Horkheimer. His faith in man as the Subject of history (despite his earlier pessimism in One-Dimensional Man),<sup>2</sup> was expressed in the idea of 'cultural revolution',<sup>3</sup> which suggested that culture can develop ahead of changes at the base of society. This idea is not new to Marxism - Marx himself demonstrated that the relationship between cultural and economic developments in history is unequal - but its overestimation is the source of Marcuse's failure to see the rebellious culture of the 1960s less optimistically, as a popular movement which ahistorically and idealistically claimed to have transcended its social determinations.

The extremities of work such as Dialectic of Enlightenment, together with the fact that the Frankfurt School thinkers have never been closely allied to overt revolutionary practice, has led to their condemnation for being 'resigned'. What hope do they allow for change, and what, if anything, do

1. Max Horkheimer and T.W. Adorno, Dialectic Enlightenment, pp. 166-167.
2. Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).
3. See Herbert Marcuse, Counter-Revolution and Revolt (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972).

they contribute towards change? Adorno proposed that Critical Theory allows hope for change because it is a revolutionary practice itself. "One clings to action", he said, "because of the impossibility of action",<sup>1</sup> but because society is "thoroughly mediated and obdurate", only "pseudo-activity" is possible, achieving small changes "on the long way toward total change".<sup>2</sup> Such changes therefore serve only to "spare one the cognition of one's own impotence". However, the truly critical thinker who can stand uncompromised above ideological social mediation is engaged in what Adorno saw as the only possible praxis and is therefore not resigned, for the hope for the future lies in keeping the critical potential alive.

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1. T.W. Adorno, "Resignation", Telos 25 (Spring, 1978): p. 166.

2. Ibid., p. 167.

## II. ART AND IDEOLOGY.

Marx never formulated a complete aesthetic theory, but he and Engels referred frequently in their writings to some of the problems of art and criticism.<sup>1</sup> It would be premature at this point to try to relate musicology or music to the concept of ideology as I have explained it in Chapter I, for such an attempt would need to take cognizance of the complex history of aesthetic debate which has dated from Marx's original work. This chapter, therefore, describes some of the general aesthetic concerns which develop from an historical materialist perspective.

Clearly, the first concern of such a perspective is that art, because it is a cultural phenomenon, must be seen to be inseparable from 'material' social production and therefore to be integrally involved in total social processes. The object of study in aesthetic theory must therefore be not only art-works themselves, but also the social processes of the production, distribution and consumption of art in society. Secondly, an historical materialist aesthetic, because it is committed to revolutionary praxis, needs to understand the function of the process of artistic production within the social totality. It is in this connection that the concept of 'ideology' is valuable: is art 'ideological' or 'non-ideological'? However, it would be undialectical to hope to list separately the ideological and the non-ideological functions of art today, for the possibilities for art in capitalist society are manifold and contradictory. The revolutionary commitment of Marxism has specific expectations of art, but to prescribe rules for artistic production would be naive. Zhdanov's didactic advocacy

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1. Marx and Engels' references to art are collected in Lee Baxandall and Stefan Morawski's Marx and Engels on Literature and Art (St. Louis, Milwaukee: Telos Press, 1973). Mikhail Lifschitz's The Philosophy of Art of Karl Marx (New York: 1938) is an attempt to synthesize these fragments into an 'aesthetic'.

of 'socialist realism' after the 1930s and his rejection of modernism as 'decadent' is a ready example of just such a naïve prescription.

Studies of the relation of art to ideology in any era have to take three mediating factors into account: the general ideology of the era, as produced in relation to the general mode of production; any specific aesthetic ideology which lays down the parameters within which art is defined; and finally the ideology of the artist himself. An art-work is a particular conjuncture in which these three mediations converge, but, because they are complexly inter-related, they cannot be discussed separately. I shall therefore concentrate on some central questions in Marxist aesthetics which sound out the complexity of the problems which arise in assessing the relation of art to ideology today.

#### I). Art as Production.

Since the general mode of economic production in society has a determining influence on superstructural phenomena, and since economic production has transformed drastically even in the century since Marx wrote Capital, one might well ask what the implications of these changes have been for artistic production. There are some ways in which the general mode of production has affected artistic production very directly. For example, the growth of cities as a result of the centralization of production has concentrated potential art-consumers in confined areas, making viable certain mass art-media which would previously have been impractical. On the other hand, low wages and long working hours have continued to impoverish some population groups so that they are too poor and exhausted to be con-

sumers of such luxuries as art. Meanwhile, the development on the general market of channels for advertising and distributing products has facilitated the effective marketing of art as a product too. Finally, the great technological developments which have been necessitated by and which have boosted the expansion of production so much since the industrial revolution, have made a far greater variety of techniques available for producing art: photography, sound-recording, film and television, as well as techniques of producing and reproducing art mechanically.

These 'forces' of artistic production which have been made available by the general mode of production influence the social relations of artistic production. For example, the social relation in which an individual artist meets popular demands on the international art-market cannot be separated from the forces of production which make that relation possible. The relations between artists and consumers form a dominant mode of artistic production in society, involving the production, distribution, exchange and consumption of art 'products'. A Marxist aesthetic needs to consider what influence this infrastructure has on the internal structure of art and on its external effects on consumers. Some of the most important work in this area was done by Walter Benjamin in the 1920s and 1930s. Benjamin believed that, in the same way as the capitalist relations of production act as fetters to the development of the forces of economic production, so traditional relations between artists and the consumers of art are inappropriate to the newly developed techniques available to artists. He advocated the use of modern techniques in art as a means towards revolutionizing the artistic relations of production, believing that this was essential before art could transcend its bourgeois ideological limitations. Art, he said, requires these modern techniques in order to keep pace with the rapidly changing modern world.

To use traditional artistic techniques to convey a revolutionary content is inadequate, if not impossible, because the bourgeois apparatus of production easily assimilates such themes without being threatened itself.<sup>1</sup> Even a technique such as photography, if it is not transformed and updated, eventually tends to "transfigure" all that it photographs, making even miser into an object of pleasure.<sup>2</sup> Artistic technique always presumes a particular relation between artists and consumers, whether it is the intimacy of, say, a lieder recital or the publicity of a radio hit parade. Traditional techniques, including formal techniques such as forms and genres, embody outmoded relations of artistic production. For example, the very use of the word 'author' is a clue to the traditional concept of 'artist': according to the semantic origins of the word, an 'author' is an 'authority' who in the extreme derives his authority from the 'Author' of all, God. This notion, in which the author/artist is beheld as a 'genius' (to whom audiences are therefore submissive), ignores the role of artists as producers. Benjamin expressed the need to examine this conventional separation between artists and consumers, and for artists to be aware of their position as producers in the production process, especially as they are productive workers in essentially the same way as the proletariat are workers. Artistic production is revolutionary, he believed, "to the degree that . . . it is capable of making co-workers out of readers or spectators".<sup>3</sup> For example, Benjamin praised socialist newspapers because they melt down the conventional separations between genres, between journalists and artists, and between authors and readers. Everyone can write to a newspaper and participate in its production; and if an artist expresses solidarity with other producers, then he is expressing solidarity with the proletariat.

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1. Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer", New Left Review 62 (Jul - Aug, 1970): p. 90.
  2. Ibid.
  3. Ibid., p. 93.

One particular new force of artistic production which especially interested Benjamin was the reproducibility of art by modern techniques, which, he maintained, brought about a change in the function of art and therefore in its nature. The mechanical reproduction of art removes it from its unique place in space and time, e.g. we can see Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa not only in the Louvre, but in any part of the world. By means of the 'reproduction', art is reactivated in the particular situation in which it is beheld and need not be an inert relic of the past. What does this do to the nature of art? "That which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction", wrote Benjamin, "is the aura of the work of art".<sup>1</sup> That is to say, art loses the 'authenticity' which was founded on its 'originality'. In reaction to the alienation of its own commercialism, bourgeois society has recalled art's origins in ritual by producing a new 'theology' of art - 'art for art's sake'. It does this in an attempt to preserve art's 'aura', i.e. the notion of art as Beauty, as creative, sensitive and universal - above the mundanities of social existence. It is this aura of the 'ritual' in art which Benjamin saw to be destroyed by mechanical reproduction. The destruction of 'aura', he wrote, marks that new perception (i.e. the perception of the 'masses'), which senses the equality of things. Thus, when art is designed for reproducibility it is based not on ritual, but on politics.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from newspapers, Benjamin believed the great potential lay in the film as a revolutionary art form. However, it is his interest in 'epic theatre' about which perhaps the most has been written. Epic theatre was developed by Bertolt Brecht, a friend of Benjamin's and in whose work

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1. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", Illuminations (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1973): p. 223.

2. Ibid., p. 226.

Benjamin showed a great interest. Brecht opposed theatrical illusion, which he felt allowed audiences to empathize emotionally with the dramatic characters, and emotions, he claimed, are not universal but are class-based. When art satisfies emotional needs, this cathartic effect quickly becomes narcotic. Audiences, Brecht believed, should rather be obliged to contemplate thoughtfully, and to take a stand in relation to the action. But how is art to avoid being cathartic? Benjamin explained that in epic theatre the 'action' is not developed; there is no exciting plot. In fact, Brecht's drama even unseats the whole dramatic tradition of tragic inevitability.<sup>1</sup> The action is constantly interrupted, usually by songs but also by signs and projections of slides, and this has the effect of juxtaposing dissimilar images in a technique called 'montage', which Benjamin recommended as a means of 'shocking' audiences out of their usual responses to art. In epic theatre, situations are presented and are perceived as real, not "with self-satisfaction, but with astonishment";<sup>2</sup> everything that audiences take for granted is made incomprehensible. Furthermore, Brecht's plays do not pretend to be anything more than 'productions': his actors do not aim at being 'convincing'; rather, they make the whole acting process very obvious. The consequently open-ended, discontinuous and contradictory nature of epic theatre therefore 'estranges' the audience, prevents cathartic satisfaction and forces them into a critical perspective.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Stanley Mitchell, "Introduction to Benjamin and Brecht", New Left Review 77 (Jan - Feb, 1973): p. 45.
  2. Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer", p. 94.
  3. This does not mean that Brecht's plays are not enjoyable, for he had a keen sense of humour and believed that theatre should be enjoyable. In fact, Benjamin even claimed that there was no better starting-point for thoughtful contemplation than laughter. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", p. 95. T.W. Adorno, however disagreed strongly, claiming that such laughter could never be revolutionary and was merely the worst of "bourgeois sadism"! T.W. Adorno, Letter to Benjamin from London, 18 March, 1936, Aesthetics and Politics (London: Verso, 1977): p. 124.

Benjamin's and Brecht's emphasis on art as production was tackled in some of its essential points by Theodor W. Adorno. Adorno was particularly antagonistic to Brecht, especially for his anti-theoretical approach to art, which he found undialectical and vulgar. His plays, Adorno found, failed to escape from the reified language code of the status quo: 'montage', he said, fails to create the new language needed for a new reality. Although Brecht's images seek to reveal the inner nature of capitalism, Adorno claimed that Brecht failed to take the responsibility of ensuring that his analysis of economic processes was theoretically correct.<sup>1</sup> What were intended as agitational plays, therefore, merely identified with capitalist violence. Brecht's plays, said Adorno, 'preached only to the saved',<sup>2</sup> to those who in the twenties and thirties were already mobilized, unlike Adorno's audiences of later decades.

The debate between Benjamin and Adorno was more profound than that with Brecht and penetrated deeper into a consideration of the possibilities for art in this century. Adorno agreed that art needs to be rid of its 'aura'; in fact, his use of the concept of 'de-aestheticization' was very close to Benjamin's reference to the process of 'de-auraticization'. He agreed with Benjamin on the primacy of 'technique' in this process, but he believed that it was formal techniques more than mechanical technology that were most effective. Adorno felt that Benjamin had too rigidly applied the categories of materialism to artistic production. One cannot simply equate mechanical reproduction with proletarianization, because the modern techniques which Benjamin advocated are easily manipulated by the

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1. T.W. Adorno, "Commitment", New Left Review 87-88 (Sept - Dec, 1974): p. 80.
  2. Quoted by Phil Slater, Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School (London: Routledge & Kegan-Paul, 1977): p. 141.

entertainment industry. Adorno pointed out that 'montage' is actually used in films very seldom, and that most films are merely mimetic. Benjamin, however, was aware of this predicament: "So long as the movie-makers' capital sets the fashion", he wrote, "as a rule no other revolutionary merit can be accredited to today's film than the promotion of a revolutionary criticism of the traditional concepts of art".<sup>1</sup> It seemed to Adorno that ideology has penetrated consciousness to such an extent in advanced capitalism that artists must seek autonomy through the use of radically new techniques. However, Benjamin was inclined to relate this autonomy to the reactionary 'aura' of art, but, as Adorno pointed out, one cannot simply equate 'aura' with autonomy and conclude that the latter is counter-revolutionary.<sup>2</sup> The privacy and elitism which characterize autonomous art are not virtues, but they are necessary in order to shelter art from reification. Not all autonomous art is what Benjamin described as 'magical', and Adorno cited Schoenberg's and Kafka's works as examples of autonomous art which lacks the aura which Benjamin strove to destroy. Benjamin, he said, was so concerned with mechanical technology that he under-estimated the 'technicality' of autonomous art.<sup>3</sup> Art's aura is declining, he wrote, "above all because of the fulfillment of its own 'autonomous' formal laws".<sup>4</sup> Autonomous art is therefore "inherently dialectical [in that] it juxtaposes the magical [auratic] and the mark of freedom"<sup>5</sup> - a mark which is created by its formal technicality and which is therefore

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1. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", p. 233.
  2. Adorno, Letter to Benjamin, 18 March, 1936, Aesthetics and Politics, p. 121.
  3. Ibid., p. 124.
  4. Ibid., pp. 122-123.
  5. Ibid., p. 122.

experienced as something that can be consciously produced, unlike aesthetic aura; which like magical ritual requires its audience to be submissive.

## 2). Art and Class.

Marx said that the ruling ideas of any era are the ideas of the ruling class. What can be said of the relation between art and class? Art is a way of seeing the world and reacting to it, and can be said to embody class values to the extent to which this world-view is equivalent to the world-view which is typical of a class. The ideological function of art must therefore be understood in relation to the historical position of the class whose values it embodies. Where art expresses the values of a politically ascending class, it is 'progressive'; but where it expresses the values of a declining ruling class, e.g. by preaching a liberal reformism aimed at reconciling rather than ending class contradictions, it is 'reactionary'.

It would be naive, however, to see art as a simple function of the ideology of the class to which an artist belongs, for an artist is not necessarily a member of the class whose values his art embodies. The art of middle-class intellectuals, for example, might be consciously allied to the cause of the proletariat. Conversely, the popular art of the working class might conceivably obstruct their own ends by distracting workers from the real issues confronting them. While it is not necessarily important to equate art with the values of only one class, it should be added that in advanced capitalist societies the class structure has become blurred. It

is no longer exclusively the proletariat that is exploited, and, because of the progressive reification of consciousness, the proletariat can no longer automatically be equated with 'progressive' values anyway.

The problems in relating art to class are especially significant when considering the aesthetics of Gyorgy Lukács. In his analyses of art of the past, Lukács praised the 'realism' of nineteenth-century writers such as Scott, Balzac and Tolstoy, who, despite their conscious affiliations to the ruling class, revealed in their art the real social processes underlying social facades. Lukács, as a Marxist, believed that these historical processes involved the decline of the bourgeoisie in the face of an ascendant working class, and he advocated 'realism' as a model for a revolutionary art which would embody historical Truth, and thus transcend ideological mediation. Lukács has been criticized for this position, so it is important to look at the concept of 'realism' more closely. Marx never used the term 'realism', but he did require of art that it be authentic in its portrayal of reality. For Lukács, the content of art is an extract from reality. "Any apprehension of the external world is nothing more than a reflection in consciousness of the world that exists independently of consciousness", he wrote.<sup>1</sup> However, art cannot mechanically reflect all of the myriads of social facts which make up reality. To do so would be 'naturalistic', and would fail to penetrate the mere surface appearance of reality, which in capitalist society is distorted and fragmented. Art needs to recapture the totality of reality, and Lukács believed that 'realism' achieved this by virtue of its form. Form was not merely 'technique' for Lukács, and he saw it to be most effective when it

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1. Gyorgy Lukács, Writer and Critic (London: 1970): p. 25.

is least obstrusive. The content of realistic art is 'formed' through the choice of typical characters in typical circumstances, and it is this unity of the particular and the general which creates a unity between appearance and reality. Lukács believed that it was by virtue of this objectivity that realism developed an organic partisanship which was aligned with the objective tendency of reality, i.e. to the ascendancy of the proletariat - even where the conscious allegiances of the artist were reactionary.<sup>1</sup>

Lukács' most vociferous critic was Bertolt Brecht. Brecht shared his belief in the partisanship of objectivity, but he disagreed that realism could be used as a model for art in the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> Realism, he argued, had its historical roots in the nineteenth century, and it was ahistorical - a breach of materialist principles - to assume that it could embody the changed situation in the twentieth century, which faced new problems and which had a whole new repertoire of techniques and resources from which to draw. Brecht claimed to have learned more from bourgeois expressionism than from realism, because, while he agreed with Lukács that expressionism failed to locate subjective responses in objective conditions, he felt that expressionists at least faced the same historical problems as he himself faced. Brecht rejected the 'totality' of realism in favour of new, open forms which could expose the contradictions of capitalism. He emphasized the continual need to be free to experiment, but Lukács rejected all modernism for being fragmented and decadent.

Lukács' aesthetic is now largely outdated, for his faith in the proletariat as the class destined to ascendancy failed to take into account the reification

1. Marx also suggested that individuals in art should be historical individuals - stripped of all that pertains only to their individuality, and yet not mere mouthpieces for their times, as in the plays of Schiller. See L. Baxandall and S. Morawski, Marx and Engels on Literature and Art, pp. 106-107.
2. See Aesthetics and Politics, in which Presentation II includes Brecht's articles on Lukács.

in advanced capitalism of the historical Subject which informs his aesthetic (including the proletarian Subject to which 'realism' was aligned). Admittedly, at the time when he formulated the basic tenets of his aesthetic, the European proletariat was mobilized and the artistic embodiment of their ascendancy may have been valid. But in the light of subsequent history - the empirical absence of an insurgent working class since the defeat of the European Socialists in the late 1920s - 'realism' simply does not meet the practical demands of contemporary aesthetic praxis.

### 3). Art as a Commodity.

The most comprehensive analysis of the ideological complicity of art with capitalism has been in the work of members of the Frankfurt School, who have seen most contemporary art as almost totally involved in a "culture industry". Nearly all artists struggle with the problem of how to make artistic production economically viable, even if only in terms of their own needs to subsist. As a result, art, in one way or another, is exchanged for money. At one time this exchange occurred on an individual level between artist and patron. Today it occurs largely within the framework of the 'market'. If an artist is to live by his art, his work must therefore be marketable. When art is exchanged for money, it takes on the features of a 'commodity': it is venerated as a reified object - a product - and becomes 'valuable' to the extent to which it can be exchanged. More than this, in contemporary market conditions, artists are seldom familiar with the market to which they are catering. As workers in the capitalist production process are alienated from their products - because their work

is only piecemeal and because they have nothing to do with the sale of their products - so artists are alienated from their art, which must satisfy the needs of a market that remains anonymous to them.

The term "culture industry" was coined by Adorno and Max Horkheimer in resistance to the term "mass culture", which suggests that the popular culture of the 'market' arises spontaneously from 'the people'.<sup>1</sup> In advanced capitalism, however, culture is not so much the product of mass or even of individual creativity as the collective product of 'industries' such as radio, television, film, theatre, publishing and recording companies. These businesses are often owned by or dependent on hard-core monopolies (such as the oil corporations in the U.S.A.), and they therefore have to participate as fiercely as any other business in the world of competition. But competition, by catering to external demands, defeats creativity. Besides, creativity in industry, by claiming a meaningful purpose for labour, threatens the production process in which work is a means to producing surplus-value and not an end in itself. It does not suit industry to have workers question the purpose of their labour, and so capitalist society tends to suppress creativity.

Today, most art admits that it is a commodity and advertises itself as an amusement, an escape from the dullness of daily work. As such, it participates in the recuperation of workers so that they may return refreshed to their jobs. The ideological function of such art exists in the fact that it contributes to the process in which leisure hours are impressed with the values and ideas developed in the labour process during

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1. See T.W. Adorno, "Culture Industry Reconsidered", New German Critique 6 (Fall, 1975): p. 12.

the day. This means that culture isn't really an escape, for leisure is supervised by the culture industry, and ultimately the routines which the culture industry develops can deprive people of the ability even to conceive of a world different from their own.

Like all ideology, the culture industry has the appearance of allowing freedom of individual choice, but this is made a mockery by two factors. Firstly, the culture industry allows no choice by making everything the same. (Even shock techniques can be neutralized, e.g. by being made gimmicky). Secondly, the culture industry reduces people to inert consumers whose very attitudes and opinions are part of the industry, and who therefore usually 'choose' in the way that the industry decides that they should choose. The bourgeois concept of the 'masses', which obscured class realities in earlier capitalist times, has therefore become appropriate in advanced capitalism as a result of this levelling of consciousness.

The Frankfurt School theorists have developed their analysis of ideology to the extent of revealing the ideological nature of personality as it is nurtured in capitalist society.<sup>1</sup> Although this is not of direct concern here, it is important to state that the apparent 'lack of imagination' in the 'masses' today is not just a function of a similar lack in art: it is also a feature of that "authoritarian personality" which is seen to be a product of life in capitalist society. This personality is characterized by a need to conform, a respect for social facades and public opinion and resistance to anything which disturbs social order. Actual individual needs have been replaced by new needs which make people dependent on the culture

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1. See T.W. Adorno, The Authoritarian Personality (New York: 1950).

industry, so that to be unfulfilled by the culture offered is to remain an outsider - which in our society is made to be a sin!'<sup>1</sup>

#### 4). Art as Negation.

The implication of the Frankfurt School's analysis of culture is that artists who, out of a commitment to social change, want to remain autonomous from ideological social mediation, have to develop new resources for art. Conventional artistic language assumes that reality can be understood in its own terms, but conventions and traditions are social agreements and cannot be regarded as 'natural' modes of communication. An artist who hopes in some way to negate the status quo, has to break the bonds of the hackneyed associations in reified consciousness. This attempt to develop the 'negative' dialectic in art has been theorized at length by Adorno and Marcuse, who have argued that it is Form that gives art its negative potential. Art is always more than a mere extract from everyday reality, and it is never merely equal to other manifestations of intellectual culture such as science or philosophy. This uniqueness of art, said Adorno and Marcuse, lies in its Form. Marcuse wrote that it is only Form in art that is enduring; it is Form that makes a work into a work of art.<sup>2</sup>

Form is not a static structure imposed on art. It is a "shaping impulse"<sup>3</sup> by which content is 'formed' through the selectivity of the artist and the inter-

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1. This paragraph is drawn from chapter four of Adorno and Horkheimer's Dialectic of Enlightenment.
  2. Herbert Marcuse, "Art as Form of Reality", New Left Review 74 (Jul - Aug, 1972): p. 53.
  3. Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (London: Oxford University Press, 1977): p. 186.

relation of lines, colours, images, ideas or sounds. There are several factors which influence the form of a work of art: the history of the art-forms available to the artist; the current general use of form; the specific relationship between the artist and his audience; and the artist's own individual projects. But Form is, above all, a dialectical product of the content of art. As Marcuse has said, in art form becomes content and content becomes form.<sup>1</sup> Through Form, art creates its own, new reality, and it is in this distance from everyday social reality that art's 'negative' potential lies.

If art is not equal to reality, what is it? In Chapter I, it was suggested that there is a Utopian moment in the Frankfurt School's Critical Theory which consists of those criteria on the basis of which reality is criticized. It is this moment which Adorno and Marcuse saw to be equal to the negative in art. This is not to say that they saw art as prefiguring a perfect society in which the 'natural' potential of human subjectivity is realized. Such is the reactionary bourgeois notion of Utopia, which affords an illusory escape from the contradictions of reality and affirms the status quo by being co-opted into the culture industry. In Classical aesthetics, the Utopian in art was always seen to be manifested in Beauty, the product of Form. Art had to be beautiful: a unity of sensibility and rationality which was seen to approach 'Truth'. However, today the function of Beauty, and thus of Form, is to afford cathartic pleasure, what Marcuse called a "holiday" from reality.<sup>2</sup> In this way, Form has become affirmative. Aesthetic sublimation has reached its historical limits, for truth is no longer seen to be beautiful. Where the horrors and suffering of the twentieth century are sublimated and made the objects of disinterested pleasure

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1. Herbert Marcuse, The Aesthetic Dimension (Boston: Beacon Press, 1977): p. 41.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

instead of provoking nausea and disgust, surely art redeems that suffering and Form 'anaesthetizes' content?<sup>1</sup> Yet, without this cathartic Form, art degenerates into ordinary language! One has to maintain a dialectical sense of Form and Beauty, and Marcuse concluded that art is powerless against the affirmation of aesthetic form. Aesthetic sublimation does at least preserve the sensuousness of Beauty, which has emancipatory potential in itself (witness the early Church's objections to secular beauty). At least aesthetic sublimation exposes by contrast the ugliness of present contradictory realities and makes possible the maintenance of a critical perspective. If art is to remain art, it must retain Form, and its negative possibilities must therefore be balanced against its affirmative consequences.

Marcuse has at times been accused of Idealism, e.g. by Terry Eagleton.<sup>2</sup> I do not want to enter into this debate here, except to say that some of Marcuse's remarks lend themselves to this interpretation, e.g. "The radical qualities of art . . . are grounded precisely in the dimensions where art transcends its social determinations".<sup>3</sup> No art transcends its social determinations and what Marcuse probably meant was that its social determinations might enable it to transcend ideology. Eagleton, of course, denies that art ever transcends ideology, but he and Pierre Macherey, another Althusserian aesthetician, do allow that art can allude to reality by distancing itself from ideology, even while being part of that ideology. They agree (implicitly) with Adorno and Marcuse that the mechanism of this

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1. Herbert Marcuse, "Art as Form of Reality", p. 55.
  2. Terence Eagleton, Criticism and Ideology, p. 179.
  3. Herbert Marcuse, The Aesthetic Dimension, p. 6.

distantiation is Form, but Macherey is not clear on how he sees art as irreducible to ideology and yet at the same time to be part of ideology. For him "there is no such thing as non-ideological recognition by the subject since ideology can only be transcended in science, where the subject has no role".<sup>1</sup>

One needs to be aware of the many possibilities for art today - after all, need all art be 'beautiful'? However, those artistic movements which have rejected highly sublimated art because it is so far removed from the realities of everyday living, who have rejected art as Form and Beauty and produced 'anti-art' as an attempt at a more explicitly political art, have only reduced art to "bits and pieces of the very society whose 'anti-art' they want to be".<sup>2</sup> Adorno insisted that art must remain autonomous, but he agreed that it also needs to be 'de-aestheticized', i.e. that the Classical aesthetic standards of Beauty, which have now become affirmative, need to be negated. He therefore encouraged the 'rehabilitation' of ugliness as a category in art<sup>3</sup> which would refuse to allow society to forget its ugly past, or to be blind to the present.

Of course, it is the historical fate of negative art to be politically ineffective because it finds an audience only among a select few whose consciousnesses have not been reified to the point of rejecting all that is unfamiliar. One can only conclude at this point, therefore, that there can be no simple relationship between art and political praxis today. This reality dominates the consideration of music's political potential today, and will therefore be taken up more fully in Chapter IV.

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1. S. Burniston and C. Weedon, "Ideology, Subjectivity and the Artistic Text", On Ideology, p. 211.
  2. Herbert Marcuse, The Aesthetic Dimension, p. 49.
  3. Richard Wolin, "The De-Aestheticization of Art: on Adorno's Aesthetische Theorie", Telos 41 (Fall, 1979): p. 114.

### III. MUSICOLOGY AS IDEOLOGY.

How does ideology feature in the way that music is talked about, specifically in musicology? The word 'musicology' in English dates back to about 1915, while in German Musikwissenschaft has been in use since at least the 1880s.<sup>1</sup> There has been a great deal of debate over what 'musicology': means, but while the discipline has nevertheless developed with the unity of a tradition, it has been one based on unspoken consensus. What is the nature of this consensus which seems to underlie the mainstream of musicological studies?

In terms of the etymology of the word, 'musicology' has to do with music and science: it is the systematized knowledge of music. In one of the first articles on the meaning of 'musicology', W.S. Pratt attempted to define musicology by answering two questions: 'what is music?' and 'what is science?'<sup>2</sup> In answer to his first question, he decided that musicology deals with the physics, psychics, poetics, aesthetics, graphics, technics and practics of music. In answer to his second question, he settled on four methods used in science: historical, encyclopaedic, critical and pedagogical. But in his first answer, Pratt uses a method which is not included in his second answer. He observes musical behaviour and concludes from his observations that the knowledge of music must take into account that music is sound (physics); that it is composed and experienced (psychics); that it is constructed in certain ways (poetics); that it affects people (aesthetics); that it is notated (graphics); that it is performed with skill (technics); and that it often has non-musical applications (practics). Pratt's method in choosing these categories is that of positivism, based on

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1. See Ernst C. Krohn, "The Development of Modern Musicology", appended to L.B. Spiess, Historical Musicology (New York: The Institute of Mediaeval Music, 1963), for a useful history of musicology.
  2. W.S. Pratt, "On Behalf of Musicology", Musical Quarterly, vol. 1, no. 1 (January, 1915): pp. 1-16.

the empiricist attitude that in science only observation is the source of knowledge, an attitude which is one of the central features of traditional musicology.

Since Pratt's early definition, there have been several attempts to define the scope of musicology, but the most influential has been that of Glen Haydon in his book Introduction to Musicology.<sup>1</sup> Haydon based his approach on the work of Guido Adler, and divided musicology into two large areas: 'historical' and 'systematic'. In the same way as Pratt failed to account theoretically for his choice of the four methods of science, so Haydon never explains the division which he chooses. He attributes it merely to philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Systematic musicology deals, it seems, with all that is not historical musicology, although historical musicology itself is required to be systematic. Haydon's musicology looks like this:

<u>Systematic</u>	<u>Historical</u>
Acoustics	The Philosophy of Music History
Physiology and Psychology in relation to Music	The Sources of Music History
Musical Aesthetics	Problems and Methods of Historical Research in Music
The Theory of Music Theory	
Musical Pedagogy	
Comparative Musicology	

Although the 'systematic' section of Haydon's book occupies more pages, it also covers a very wide variety of topics, none of which is covered in such systematic detail as the 'historical' section.

In the influence that this division of musicology has had, it has become an excuse for concentrating on the history of music only, for the subdivisions of 'systematic' musicology, by virtue of their specialized knowledge, have been judged to be more in the domains of physics, physiology,

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1. Glen Haydon, Introduction to Musicology (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1941).

2. *Ibid.*, p.7.

psychology, philosophy, pedagogy or anthropology, and so have been left to experts in those fields. It is seldom recommended that musicologists study something of these other fields in order to know more about music. On the contrary, it is more typical to find that musicologists recommend that the fundamental learnings for beginners in musicology are music itself and languages.<sup>1</sup> The reason for studying languages is that they are needed in the study of the history of music. Bibliography reference sources such as the Music Index and Repertoire International de Littérature Musicale readily display the emphasis on historical musicology in scholarship today. Thus, by 'unspoken consensus' in the definition of musicology, traditional musicology is largely the study of the history of music.

What is 'historical musicology'? Analysis of the most referred to music histories and to some musicological textbooks reveals that the mainstream of musicology is characterized by historical eccentricities resulting firstly from a positivist epistemology, and secondly, from Idealism.

Positivism is characterised by a regard to history as the object of 'observation', as an array of myriads of 'facts' which appear to be 'out there', i.e. to be separate from the historian. The historian 'observes' musical behaviour of the past as it 'appears' to him in manuscripts and archives. He organizes his knowledge and presents it systematically as the 'history of music'. However, this presentation displays some peculiarities which are a direct result of the positivist historian's method. Little account is taken of the philosophical problems surrounding the

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1. See for example Friedrich Blume, "Musical Scholarship Today", Perspectives in Musicology, ed. B.S. Brook, E.O.D. Downes and S. Van Solkema (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1972): p.17.

question of what constitutes a fact and whether one can ever objectively 'know' an historical fact. Facts do not exist before they are constituted as facts by theory, but in musicology, the historian is credited with an extraordinary degree of objectivity, and because he is seen to be totally separate from the facts being observed, music is treated as a natural phenomenon, independent of all theory.

To be confronted by myriads of 'natural' historical facts which are not seen in relation to each other or to underlying processes requires that they be systematized, as in the physical sciences, according to the mere appearances of phenomena. Music and events are therefore categorized, and music history thus comprises, on the whole, the analysis of musical styles and techniques (i.e. the appearances of music) and their categorization according to geographical proximity (e.g. national 'schools' of music), temporal proximity (e.g. music of a particular era), or stylistic similarity (e.g. music of a particular form). This primary concern with style and technique is apparent in such familiar and typical sub-titles as "Polyphony based on the perfect Consonance and its Displacement by Polyphony based on the Third".<sup>1</sup>

The major tool in categorization is chronology, and most general music histories simply present a chronological sequence of the events of musical history. However, chronology is no more than a tool, and because positivism fails to penetrate to the basic processes of history, it fetishizes the categories which it discerns, giving to what are actually theoretical constructs the status of the concrete. This fetishization is apparent in two ways. Firstly, it leads to the rigid delineation of 'periods' in history, the limits of which are based on a fundamental error

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1. Gustav Reese, Music in the Middle Ages (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1940): Part III.

in understanding history, for categories do not exist before facts. Periodization or the labelling of 'schools' in music history often interferes with style-analysis, the very starting point of the empirical method. For example, D.A. Hughes, while emphasizing that history "abhors firmly drawn lines", chooses to exclude the music of Dunstable and Dufay from the Renaissance, due to some preconception that the Renaissance needs to be located as a period in time. He writes :

Despite the marked change of style initiated by Dunstable, Dufay, and their English and Burgundian colleagues, it would be a gross oversimplification to suggest that in music the Renaissance began during the second quarter of the fifteenth century. <sup>1</sup>

However, the Renaissance was not a period of time: it was a rebirth of Classical culture, expressed in music in a change in style - as in the later works of Dunstable and Dufay!

The compulsion to categorize history merely raises pseudo-problems for analysis. For example, the difficulty that music historians have had in locating Beethoven and Schubert between the 'Classical' and 'Romantic' periods is not the result of those composers' eccentricities, but of rigid periodization. Alternatively, categorization degenerates into a farcical mass of sub-categories intended to accommodate all stylistic changes. For example, around the turn of the nineteenth century, historians are at a loss to find all-encompassing 'periods' and refer variously to periods of 'Romanticism', 'Realism', 'Impressionism', 'Expressionism', 'Serialism', etc.

A second way in which the fetishization of categories in music histories is apparent is in the tendency to attribute to periods a life of their own,

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1. D.A. Hughes, ed. New Oxford History of Music, vol. III (London: Oxford University Press, 1960): p.xvii.

seeing them as having a determining influence over music. For example, Paul Lang has claimed that the Baroque 'moulded' the arts according to its own 'spirit', as though this 'spirit' were somehow separable from art and autonomous in history.<sup>1</sup> At this point, positivism is identical with that other feature of traditional musicology, Idealism - the explanation of history in terms of a metaphysical 'moving spirit'. According to this attitude, the history of Man is merely a manifestation of a process external to it. Idealism is often linked to the chronological exposition of history as a continuous process, fulfilling a potential to develop and progress. Certainly, Man has progressed in the development of the techniques with which he controls his natural environment to his benefit, but to transfer this sense of development to music history leads to some ludicrous historiography.

For example, Richard Crocker sees continuity as an imperative in itself: "That [the developments of Schoenberg and Webern] had to be was simply a matter of historical continuity", he writes.<sup>2</sup> The assumption that music has a predisposition to progress is often manifested in value-laden interpretative and descriptive language such as 'ripe' Classical style or "primitive" duet-writing, (the latter being Alfred Einstein's assessment of the music of Monteverdi, whom he sees as having been a "victim" of "unreadiness").<sup>3</sup> One wonders what value-criteria are being applied when one reads assertions such as this one:

Primitive music [referring to ancient music] depends on routine and instinct rather than on knowledge. This is its weakness that nothing can overcome.<sup>4</sup>

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1. See Leo Treitler's criticism of Lang in "On Historical Criticism", Musical Quarterly LIII (1967): p.201.
  2. Richard Crocker, quoted by Leo Treitler in "The Present as History", Perspectives in New Music (Spring, 1969): p.8.
  3. Alfred Einstein, Greatness in Music (London: Oxford University Press, 1941): pp. 203 and 205.
  4. Curt Sachs, The Rise of Music in the Ancient World (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1944): p.52.

When one has a fixed idea of the smooth 'development' of music, it is difficult to 'slot in' those composers whose works fall outside apparent trends. However, as was the case with rigid periodization, irregularities in the 'continuous development' of music history are not the result of eccentricity in individuals, but are the result of the error made in seeing music history as a 'continuous development'. Music histories display a variety of peculiarities based on this error. For example, historical development is freely described in analogies of growth (e.g. "The Growth of Polyphony" or "The Roots of Polyphonic Style"), motion (e.g. "The Rise of Polyphony" or "progress towards polyphonic style") and evolution. It is seldom questioned whether these analogies are appropriate: in fact they come to be seen as the truth and no longer as the mere analogies that they are. Leo Treitler has quoted the contemporary composer Milton Babbitt complaining that the lack of interest in new music will cause music to "cease to evolve".<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the height of ahistorical thinking is the attempt to elaborate a theory of the evolution of music via the study of contemporary, so-called 'primitive' musics. For example, Egon Wellesz believes that these cultures, because they are 'static', can give us insight into ancient cultures, and therefore into our own origins.<sup>2</sup> No culture is static, and while the instruments of certain contemporary cultures may suggest the sort of simple instruments used in antiquity, there is no historical foundation for relating any contemporary music-cultural process, specific to its own particular environment and time, to another music-cultural process of another environment and time.

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1. Leo Treitler, "The Present as History", p.4.

2. See E. Wellesz, ed. New Oxford History of Music, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1957): p.1.

Another feature of Idealism in traditional musicology is the exaggeration of the significance of individuals in history. This reveals itself mainly in the explanation of history in terms of 'great' men. No-one can deny that there are differences between individuals and that some people have exceptional talents. Such talent has featured prominently in the history of music, but it is always subject to historical limits. No matter how 'great' a composer is, he embodies historical forces: he might mould these forces in specific ways, but he cannot change them. In histories based on the theory that earlier events cause later events in a continuous causal process, a hierarchy of more or less influential composers, 'trend-setters' and 'forerunners' is built. Biographical detail is found to be of great interest, often irrespective of its relevance to music. "Talent is all that matters in the history of art - forms are simply the 'physiology', not the 'biography' of man", says Cecil Gray.<sup>1</sup> David Ewen's book From Bach to Stravinsky<sup>2</sup> sees history as a series of 'geniuses'. Its contents read as follows :

- I The Periods of musical history.
- II The beginnings of opera.
- III Bach.
- IV Handel.
- V Haydn.
- VI Mozart.
- VII Beethoven.
- VIII The Romantic Movement.
- IX Schubert.
- X Chopin.
- XI Schumann.
- XII Wagner.
- XIII Brahms.
- XIV Russian musical history in kaleidoscope.

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1. Cecil Gray, The History of Music (New York: A. Knopf, 1931): p.3  
 2. David Ewen, From Bach to Stravinsky (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968).

- XV Tschaikowsky.
- XVI Franck.
- XVII Debussy and Ravel.
- XVIII Late Romanticism and modern trends.
- XIX Stravinsky.
- XX Harking back and looking forward.

One does not have to choose the weaker works of historical musicology in order to find examples such as these, for this tendency characterizes even such modern respected works as the New Oxford History of Music, the planned eighth volume of which is to be entitled "The Age of Beethoven". This title reflects a typical practice when periodization is difficult, and suggests that 'ages' owe what they are to composers, whereas the reverse is true. 'Lesser' composers are treated scantily, if at all, as if they were of no significance, whereas even a lack of 'genius' in any era is of social significance. The geniuses chosen to represent an age are more a product of how their music is perceived by historians than of how it was perceived in its own day. In 1868, for example, the Renaissance was to A.W. Ambros the 'age of Palestrina'.<sup>1</sup> Today, historians familiar with the work of Dufay and Josquin see Palestrina as a conservative, as though he had chosen to resist the 'evolution' of music!

In his book Historical Musicology, Lincoln Spiess lists what he considers to be the work that still needs to be done on the various 'periods' of music history. This is his list for the Baroque era :<sup>2</sup>

1. Editions of music.
  - A. Practical editions for performance.
  - B. Opera omnia.
  - C. Complete editions of a composer's work in one medium.
  - D. Reprints of important original publications (in facsimile and transcription).

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1. A.W. Ambros, Geschichte der Musik in Zeitalter der Renaissance bis zur Palestrina (1868), cited by F. Blume, Renaissance and Baroque Music (London: Faber and Faber, 1968): p.35.

2. Lincoln B. Spiess, Historical Musicology, p.17.

## II. Studies.

- A. Biography.
- B. Studies of the style of the works of an individual composer.
- C. Interpretive studies (studies of performance practice).
- D. Survey studies of individual media.
- E. Survey studies of individual forms.
- F. Modern editions of original theoretical works (in facsimile and translation).

Spiess' emphasis on the individuals in history (and on musicology's service to performance) is self-evident. The need for editions of music cannot be doubted, but assuming that all the research recommended by Spiess were done on all eras, would historical musicology be complete? On the contrary, traditional musicology makes some very obvious omissions. I shall discuss these as two related topics: the absence of a social perspective in music history, and the absence of studies of any music other than the 'art-music' of Western culture.

Traditional music history is 'unpopulated', except by talented composers and performers. It is what I described in my preface as "oblivious of contradictory and alienating social conditions". History is not seen as a dynamic process in which people interact with their environment and with each other to produce a culture, an element of which is musical activity. Music history is discussed as though it were separate from, or unrelated to, the history of Man, as though the people who make music are not the same as those who labour daily to produce what they require to satisfy their needs. However, there is essentially no 'history of music'; there is only the history of Man, (including his musical activities). When music is seen to be autonomous, to 'evolve' independently of other human activity, music history is hypostatized and abstracted out of social realities, (making it possible for those who are familiar with the traditions of musicology to feel that discussions of infrastructural social processes - such as are

included in my Introduction - are of no concern to them).

The second omission in traditional musicology is that of studies of music other than Western art-music. Spiess begins the preface to his book Historical Musicology by describing his subject as "the study of the development of music in Western culture"<sup>1</sup> (emphasis added). His intention is not to suggest that other cultures are history-less: he is merely describing historical musicology as it is - without concerning himself with why it is like that or with whether it should be so. Not only does musicology deal mainly with the history of music; not only does it usually exclude all social factors from musical activity; but in addition it is also restricted mainly to the study of only one culture. The reasons for this are seldom stated. One can accept that Western musicologists are likely to be better qualified to study their own musical history. One can also accept that many non-Western musical studies require very different skills from those of Western music, e.g. skills in foreign languages, recording and transcription. But none of this accounts for a definition of musicology which excludes studies of a vast amount of the world's music and relegates it to the domain of 'ethnomusicology'. The limitation of musicology to the study of 'art-music' is also never explained. It seems likely that traditional musicology avoids popular art precisely because it reveals social realities too closely, e.g. in songs of protest. Musicologists contemplate, rather, the Form and Beauty of 'great' music, which distances itself from those realities and which therefore allows a degree of cathartic satisfaction. Non-art-music is therefore also relegated to that 'non-musicology' - 'ethnomusicology'. But what is the theoretical justification

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1. L.B. Spiess, Historical Musicology, p.v.

for the co-existence of two separate 'musicologies'? Before answering this question, it is necessary to draw some general conclusions about 'traditional' musicology as a whole.

It is my contention that the eccentricities which I have described in traditional musicology are ideological distortions characteristic of bourgeois consciousness. The 'ruling' musicology, that is, is that of the ruling class. This is plausible since the organizations on which musicological studies depend for patronage, such as universities, publishing companies and those large corporations which establish 'foundations' or grants, are directly involved in the established mode of production in society. (Universities, when not subsidized by the State, are generally supported by business interests). These organizations are superstructural phenomena which tend on the one hand to be determined by and to maintain the economic relationships at the base of society, and on the other hand to perform an infrastructural function in prescribing the direction and limits of musicology. This is not to say that there is a direct relationship between musicology and economics, which would be mechanistic, but that bourgeois musicology is necessarily permeated by the distortions of bourgeois ideology.

Empiricism and Idealism must be understood in terms of their roots in the social base of capitalist society. The economic process of 'exchange' appears to place all people in a position of freedom and equality (the premise of 'free enterprise'), and it is therefore necessarily accompanied by a belief in the autonomy of individuals, including a faith in the power of human Reason and in the authenticity of individual apprehensions of the world. This belief is the basis for the Idealist notion that individuals are the Subject of history, and it is also the basis for the empiricist

emphasis on observation as absolute and unmediated - as the truth from which one can reason one's way to 'knowledge'. Such autonomy is a fetishization of the individual, for it fails to apprehend capitalist social relationships as unfree and unequal - it abstracts individuals out of social realities. Similarly, all that is perceived by the 'autonomous individual' is objectified and fetishized in the same way: even music - like the worker's product, the commodity - is not seen as socially produced or as embodying social relations.

Bourgeois musicology is ideological because it serves to conceal social contradictions and thus makes a contribution to the maintenance of the status quo. The 'problems' in musicology are not real problems and so arguments are circular: the question of whether Beethoven's style was characteristic of the Classical era is not important, but we do need to know, for example, in what ways Beethoven was an historical product of his contradictory social environment and how this was evident in his music. Arguments which take the attitude that music does not always reflect social processes - that sometimes it is a "flight into antithesis"<sup>1</sup> - miss the point entirely. Even a "flight into antithesis" is a socially produced phenomenon.

Because bourgeois consciousness serves the interests of the status quo, it fails to understand history as a social process and resorts to organizing knowledge in terms of categories, to which it clings as though they were true and immutable. The broader categories of knowledge are hypostatized in the same way as the 'periods' and 'schools' of bourgeois musicology. We have seen how musicology itself is a 'category' which is separated from

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1. Alfred Einstein, "Fictions that have Shaped Musical History", Essays on Music (London: Faber and Faber, 1958): p.24.

physics, physiology, psychology, philosophy, pedagogy and anthropology. Furthermore, it is a category distinguished in musical knowledge from 'ethnomusicology'. Etymologically, the word 'ethnomusicology' suggests the study of 'ethnic' music.<sup>1</sup> The word 'ethnic', however, has no connotations which suggest geographical specificity. Ravi Shankar has objected to Indian music being labelled "ethnic music": why, he asks, not call Western music 'ethnic'?<sup>2</sup>

That 'ethnomusicology' lacks a theory to justify its separate existence from 'musicology' is made apparent in such statements as this by Mantle Hood:

Ethnomusicology embraces all kinds of music not included by studies in historical musicology, i.e. the study of cultivated music in the western European tradition.<sup>3</sup>

In other words, ethnomusicology is not a discipline whose existence is based on a particular theory of musical production. It is merely defined negatively in relation to another discipline which is also unfounded in theory, i.e. historical musicology. Similar ideological distortions are apparent even in the work of that pioneer in ethnomusicology, Jaap Kunst:

The study-object of ethnomusicology ... is the traditional music and musical instruments of all cultural strata of mankind, from the so-called primitive peoples to the civilized nations. Our science, therefore, investigates all tribal and folk music, and every kind of non-Western art music.<sup>4</sup>

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1. See Alan P. Merriam, "Definitions of 'Comparative Musicology' and 'Ethnomusicology': an Historical-Theoretical Perspective", Ethnomusicology XXI (1977): pp. 189-204, for a useful history of the term 'ethnomusicology' and of definitions of its scope.
  2. Ravi Shankar, in the preface to Peggy Holroyde's Indian Music: A Vast Ocean of Promise (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1972): p.9.
  3. F.L. Harrison, M. Hood and C.V. Palisca, Musicology (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1963): p.217.
  4. Jaap Kunst, Ethnomusicology (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974): p.1.

These two sentences are contradictory, but for Kunst the word 'traditional' refers exclusively to the particular music which he mentions in the second sentence. However, there is surely no music which is not 'traditional', in any sense of the word, if music is viewed as a social product.

It is not true to say that ethnomusicology is valueless. To the contrary, it is in ethnomusicology that one generally finds the sort of socio-cultural analyses of music which are so noticeably absent in musicology - bourgeois consciousness is less threatened by sociological analyses of distant cultures. Nevertheless, these analyses are claimed to be something other than musicology, e.g. 'ethnomusicology', the 'anthropology of music' or the 'sociology of music'.

There are some bourgeois histories of music which do contain discussion of Western music in relation to society. Headings such as "Music and French Society in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries"<sup>1</sup> or "The Sociology of Baroque Music"<sup>2</sup> are not uncommon. However, these discussions usually deal only with the changing patronage of music, with 'social' activities such as the printing and publishing of music, or with the varying costs of orchestras and musical training. They are usually introductory and are therefore not thorough - they appear more as token tributes to social history than as analyses based soundly in social theory.<sup>3</sup> There are also several writers who have challenged the distinction between musicology and ethnomusicology, but who have done so from within the bourgeois perspective of 'anthropology' or 'sociology'. Thus, although their work might be cited

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1. Isabelle Cazeaux, French Music in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975).
  2. Manfred Bukofzer, Music in the Baroque Era (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1974): ch. 12.
  3. A book like Alfred Einstein's Music in the Romantic Era (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1947) is undoubtedly exceptional among the most revered histories of music in the space given to social considerations of music and in the value of its observations, especially the discussion of the changing function of the composer-individual in the society of the nineteenth century.

to contradict the claim that bourgeois academia has failed to see music as a social phenomenon, there is something vitally lacking in this work too. Firstly, it also lacks the theoretical framework by which music can be understood as a social phenomenon. For example, Charles Hamm, in an article entitled "Changing Patterns in Society and Music: the U.S. Since World War II"<sup>1</sup> employs the following method. Firstly, he describes all the cultural changes which occurred in the U.S.A. in the 1950 s and 1960 s: political changes, economic changes, developments in literature, etc.; then he describes the musical changes of the same period; and finally, in place of relating his two lists of changes in terms of a theoretical explanation, he merely points out the elementary correspondences between them.

Charles Seeger, in whose work such promising sub-titles as "Music and Class Structure in the United States"<sup>2</sup> appear, also lacks the theoretical background to give his work real substance. This particular chapter fails to define classes specifically and makes no conclusions about how social structure is immanent in the music itself. These failings are particularly acute in his brief article "On Proletarian Music",<sup>3</sup> a testimony to Seeger's vague, non-materialist concept of class and to his naive sense of aesthetics, which he sees to be concerned primarily with the relationship between 'content' and 'technics'. It is this theoretical bankruptcy which makes his well-known discussion of 'synchronic' versus 'diachronic' orientations in music history unnecessarily abstract.<sup>4</sup>

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1. C. Hamm, B. Nettl and R. Byrnesyde, Contemporary Music and Music Cultures (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, inc., 1975): ch. 2.
  2. Charles Seeger, Studies in Musicology 1935 - 1975 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977): ch. XII.
  3. Charles Seeger, "On Proletarian Music", Modern Music vol. XI, no. 3 (March - April, 1934): pp. 121-127.
  4. See the Introduction to Seeger's Studies in Musicology.

Alan P. Merriam, while developing a theory of ethnomusicology in his Anthropology of Music,<sup>1</sup> actually rules out the possibility of relating music to basic social processes. He locates his field within the 'humanities', but then he distinguishes these from the 'social sciences' because culture, he says, cannot be accounted for in terms of human needs.<sup>2</sup> This theory of culture is plainly quite contrary to the historical materialist position that human activity is a function of human needs, and that superstructural phenomena, including music, are determined in a dialectical relationship to these needs. However, it cannot be denied that in practice Merriam treats music as a socio-cultural process and emphasizes the social character of musical behaviour. As a result, and because his method is applicable to all cultures and musics, The Anthropology of Music is a sound foundation for a new musicology, despite its attempt to justify itself as 'ethnomusicology'.

Gilbert Chase has attempted to overcome the traditional distinction between musicology and ethnomusicology by applying a 'structuralist' approach to music. In so doing he relates 'surface structures', as revealed for example in musical language, to 'deeper structures', as found in society as a whole. This in itself is not problematic, but Chase treats musical language as though it were something separate from society, to be fragmented and analyzed as though it were not socially produced. It is invalid to analyse the surface structure of music in terms of "equivalent sequences"<sup>3</sup> because one loses a sense of the music as a whole.

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1. Alan P. Merriam, The Anthropology of Music (Northwestern University Press, 1964).
  2. Ibid., p. 22.
  3. See Gilbert Chase, "Structuralism and Music: a Preliminary Overview", Two Lectures in the Form of a Pair (New York: Institute of Studies in American Music, 1973): p. 31.

Every aspect of music's surface structure - including genres and even conventions such as 'correct' doubling - is a form of social agreement. It is therefore not possible to explain musical language merely as a structured system of signs, as in some form of musical 'linguistics'.

A second reason why the bourgeois cultural/anthropological approach to music lacks validity is that, as is to be expected, it displays a positivistic attitude.<sup>1</sup> Bourgeois anthropology is impressed by the order of societies and their apparent stability. This order is seen to be maintained by a number of functions which are observable in the form of social institutions, including musical institutions. Anthropology merely describes this order as an aggregate of social relations empirically observed. It does not penetrate this apparent social totality by analyzing immanent social structures, and musical 'facts' are therefore constituted independently of that which gives them historical significance.

Perhaps the most honest bourgeois sociology of music is that of Alphons Silbermann, whose undisguised empiricism leads him to limit his studies to "demonstrable facts"<sup>2</sup> : the quantifiable social effects of art. It thus sees music as a stimulus only. For Silbermann, the most important effect of music is the experience of it. However, this assumes that only that music which is experienced is important, and neglects the possibility that significance might also lie in the fact that a great deal of music, e.g. avant-garde music, is not included in the experience of most people. It also assumes that nothing can be learned from the gaps or inconsistencies in those musical experiences which people do have.

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1. For a fuller discussion, see David Goddard, "Anthropology: the Limits of Functionalism", in R. Blackburn, ed. Ideology in Social Science (Fontana, 1972): pp. 61-75.
  2. Alphons Silbermann, The Sociology of Music (London: Routledge & Kegan-Paul, 1963): p. 9.

As the empirical analysis of music merely paraphrases music, describing the building and ebbing of tension, so Silbermann's sociology of music merely states what is and contributes nothing new.

Francois Lesure has complained that musicology lacks concrete goals.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, when one reads Lincoln Spiess' consideration of possible research topics one has no sense that he has any other purpose than that of filling in the lacunae in our knowledge of the past. Research seems to be an end in itself. Even in that well-known debate between Joseph Kerman and E. Lowinsky,<sup>2</sup> there is no sense that musicology should in any way be socially committed. Kerman admits that music is a social phenomenon, but he claims that musicologists should study society in order to understand music. In fact, most musicologists would probably disagree with Lesure's criticism, saying like Kerman, that their goal is simply to know more about music :

The starting point and the final aim of all musical scholarship should be music.<sup>3</sup>

The ideological effect of this attitude is obvious, for it allows musicologists to avoid studying Man himself in his historical reality, and thus to avoid confronting those social contradictions which are an indictment of the status quo.

1. Francois Lesure, "Toward a Committed Musicology", Current Musicology XIV (1972): pp. 128-130.
2. See J. Kerman, "A Profile for American Musicology", Journal of the American Musicological Society, XVIII (1965): pp. 61-69; E. Lowinsky, "Character and Purposes of American Musicology: a Reply to Joseph Kerman", JAMS XVIII (1965): pp. 222-234; and J. Kerman, "Rebuttal to 'Reply' by Lowinsky", JAMS XVIII (1965): pp. 426-427.
3. F. Blume, "Musical Scholarship Today", p.26. Kerman does at least see music as a human product and not merely as an object of observation. After all, it would be beyond the limits of musicology to strive to be equal to 'sociology', but it is nevertheless desirable to achieve a general sociological understanding in musicology via the specific study of music as a social phenomenon.

D.J. Grout has claimed that musicology should not be tainted by "ulterior interest";<sup>1</sup> Silbermann has similarly stated that the sociology of music should be value-free.<sup>2</sup> However, an historian is necessarily a product of his own historical moment, and 'ulterior interest' is therefore unavoidable.<sup>3</sup> Any cultural activity which claims to be neutral and which fails to engage critically with its subject matter, ultimately serves the values of the status quo. "Knowledge is always knowledge for a purpose".<sup>4</sup> If musicology is really to go to the mirror, as Vincent Duckles has suggested it is tending to do,<sup>5</sup> it needs to ask not only 'what is musicology?' but 'why is musicology as it is and whom does it serve?'

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1. D.J. Grout, "Current Historiography and Music History", in Harold Powers, ed. Studies in Music History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968): p. 27.
  2. A. Silbermann, The Sociology of Music, pp. 14-15.
  3. See Georg Knepler, "Music Historiography in Eastern Europe", Perspectives in Musicology, p. 233.
  4. E.H. Carr, What is History? (Penguin Books, 1961): p. 27.
  5. Vincent Duckles, "Musicology at the Mirror: A Prospectus for the History of Musical Scholarship", Perspectives in Musicology, pp. 32-49.

IV. TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE MUSICOLOGY.

If one's daily experiences reveal the contradictions and inequalities in society, and if one believes that these conditions are the product of the most basic forms of human activity - and that they are therefore alterable by new forms of human activity - then one must reject all that pretends to be neutral and which affirms those conditions by failing to take them seriously. If musicology is to be committed, it must strive, not to be value-free, but to affirm new values on the basis of which social conditions can be viewed critically and can ultimately be changed. However, to define an alternative musicology is not to suggest an alternative 'category'. This chapter therefore aims to raise the most relevant issues in all their diversity, without prescribing specific limits or directions. It will be noticed that I have referred only to Western musical culture, but this is because it has mainly been Western culture that has formed my own musical experience. I have not theoretically precluded the possibility of applying my approach to non-Western music.

In developing an historical materialist musicology, I have drawn extensively on the work of Theodor W. Adorno for theoretical guidance and for research examples. Although Adorno is not usually thought of as a 'musicologist', and although he himself would have objected to being labelled a 'Marxist' (as much as to being categorized at all), he, more than any other writer, has laid the foundations for a new musicology. While he is perhaps best known amongst musicians for his 'sociology of music', his refusal to choose between the study of music and the study of philosophy has given his work a comprehensiveness and totality lacking in bourgeois musicology.

I). Music as Production.

To what extent is it valid to regard the process of musical production as being parallel to or reflecting the economic mode of production in society? As a feature of the social superstructure, musical production can be expected to be to some degree determined by that mode of production and by the general ideology which maintains that mode. Adorno initially based his theory of culture on Marx's theory of value. He equated production with composition, distribution with the reproduction of music, exchange with the 'culture industry' and consumption with music's reception by its audience. Later in his life, he criticized this equation for being too mechanical. In "On the Social Situation of Music" of 1932<sup>1</sup> he had identified the economic and artistic levels of production; in his Introduction to the Sociology of Music<sup>2</sup> he found them similar but not identical. One cannot assume, for example, that as the social relations of economic production fetter the development of the forces of production, so do the social relations established in the musical production process fetter the development of musical productive forces. This is only a partial truth, and musicology needs to discern the extent to which musical production is autonomous. What are the forces of musical production? These exist not only in the activity of composing music, but also in the reproduction of music by performing artists,<sup>3</sup> in the technical possibilities inherent in musical material itself, in the versatility of musical instruments and in the available techniques of mechanical reproduction.<sup>4</sup> The productive force inherent in musical material can best be understood in relation to the historically developed receptivity of audiences. To take an example from

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1. T.W. Adorno, "On the Social Situation of Music", Telos 35 (Spring 1978): pp. 128-164.
  2. T.W. Adorno, Introduction to the Sociology of Music (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976).
  3. Marx pointed out that a pianist, for example, is as much a productive worker as a piano-maker. See Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature, p.93.
  4. See T.W. Adorno, Introduction to the Sociology of Music, p.219.

Western music history, the addition of the interval of a third to parallel organum would have had a strongly disturbing effect on its audience, but it would no longer have had such an impact in the eighteenth century, provided that the triad established by the addition of that interval was not remote from the key of the piece of music. This degree of expressiveness within the very material of music therefore constitutes a 'productive force' by virtue of its potential to affect an audience in some new way.

The nature of the process of musical production to some degree determines the nature of the relationships between composers, performers, other 'reproducers' and audiences. On a simple level, this can be understood in the example of the development of techniques of recording and broadcasting music, for this productive force has led to a popularization of music, to a relationship between composer and audience which appears to be perfectly rational - the composer produces what the audience wants to consume.

However, one needs to penetrate further than this, and to understand the extent to which the established relations of musical production actually fetter the development of productive forces. In the above example, it is also true that composers are severely restricted by consumers' demands and that they are not free to develop their own creative resources and the potentialities of the musical material available to them.

The nature of the process of musical production since the end of the days of patronage - largely coincidental with the decline of feudalism - has been that music has been exchanged on the market as a commodity. However,

the commodity character of music is not determined by its being exchanged, but by its being abstractly exchanged, in the way in which Marx explained the commodity

form: hence not an immediate but a 'reified' exchange relation occurs.<sup>1</sup>

It is this reified relation which appears to be 'rational' but which is actually typical of commodity fetishism: value appears to be a property of the music itself.

Adorno correlated the illusion of the rationality of the social relations of music with the illusion of intelligibility within music itself. As Gillian Rose has put it :

Music which is reproduced and/or produced according to the prevalent norms of the most wide-spread intelligibility mistakenly appears intelligible both in terms of the social relations of its production and in terms of the structuring of meaning in the music itself.<sup>2</sup>

Conversely, the controversial process in which, say, avant-garde music is produced for a negligibly small audience, appears to be irrational, and avant-garde music itself is perceived as unintelligible. The contradiction between the forces and the relations of musical production, between the composer's demand for autonomy and the consumer's demand for intelligibility, is a contradiction which dominates the process of musical production in capitalist society and which has its roots in the contradictions immanent in the capitalist mode of production.

Mediating between these two realms of musical production and consumption is musical reproduction, which serves production by making the 'dead' score into sound, and which is therefore the form which all consumption takes. As such, the conflicting demands of production and consumption meet

1. T.W. Adorno to Ernst Krenek, 30 September 1932, in T.W. Adorno and E. Krenek, Briefwechsel (1974) p.36, quoted in Gillian Rose, The Melancholy Science, (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1978): p.118.
2. Gillian Rose, The Melancholy Science, p.136.

in the reproduction of music.

When production and consumption meet in this way, within the innermost cells of reproduction, reproduction then becomes the most narrowly defined scene for the conflicts into which they enter with each other. If reproduction involves only alienated music, it cannot hope to reach society; as reproduction for society, it misses the essence of the works involved.<sup>1</sup>

In pre-capitalist times, reproduction was dominated by tradition, which guaranteed the direct relation of music to its public. However, in the bourgeois era, the establishment of free competition has forced the musical interpreter to choose between strict realization of the score or adjusting to the demands of the market-public. "In the nineteenth century", as Adorno has pointed out, "the 'interpretive personality' mediated between these two demands as the last musical refuge of irrational reproduction within the capitalist process", but under monopoly capitalism the freedom of reproduction has grown "highly problematic".<sup>2</sup> Through copiously annotated instructions to performers, composers impose their will entirely over reproduction, a control which culminates in the production of music for machines, (e.g. electronic synthesizers). Thus,

the perfection of the machine and the replacement of human forces of labour through mechanical forces has become a matter of reality in music as well [as in social and economic developments].<sup>3</sup>

The analysis of the social relations established in the performance of music reveals something of the nature of the music produced and of the society in which it is produced. Consider the example of the conductor/orchestra/audience relationship in Western music history. The conductor's image is

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1. T.W. Adorno, "On the Social Situation of Music", p.146.

2. Ibid., p. 147.

3. Ibid., p.148.

one of power: he appears to be creating the music performed; his attire is that of the 'master' class; he has control over 'his' orchestra. In fact, his domination of the orchestral 'machine' is not unlike that of the corporation boss over his production process. On the other hand, the conductor must be emotional and irrational - the traditional marks of 'genius'. This image caters not only to a dialectical master/servant relationship between conductor and orchestra, a relationship in which the conductor is simultaneously admired and resented, but is also aimed directly at the audience, at whose 'service' the conductor appears to be.<sup>1</sup>

The performance of chamber music - a situation in which a few performers play to a small elite audience of trained listeners - embodies a situation in which the development of musical productive forces has antagonized the established relations of musical production, (i.e. composition for popular consumption). In fact, chamber music in the bourgeois era has been the sphere in which music has characteristically been able to develop beyond what is popular, exploring chromaticism and dissonance - the sounds of an alienated society. Subsequently, however, the explosive developments in Schoenberg's music could not be contained by the social relations of the chamber ensemble, and it is in relation to this further development of musical productive forces that the 'chamber orchestra' and 'chamber symphony' must be understood.<sup>2</sup>

Taking up Walter Benjamin's interest in the mechanical reproduction of art, and stating the problem more broadly, how have technological develop-

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1. T.W. Adorno, "On the Social Situation of Music", pp. 150-151; see also Adorno's Introduction to the Sociology of Music, ch.7: "Conductor and Orchestra: Aspects of Social Psychology".
  2. See T.W. Adorno, Introduction to the Sociology of Music, ch.6: "Chamber Music".

ments impinged on the musical status quo? Looking at this problem in relation to the history of Western music, it is clear that music has been influenced by more techniques than merely those of mechanical reproduction. For example, the development of techniques of notating music influenced musical production by making rehearsing possible, so that longer and more complex music could be managed by performers. A deliberate process of 'composition' began to replace performance based on oral tradition, and the internal structure of the music of the time can only be fully understood in relation to this development. Musical notation was a prerequisite for the later development of techniques of printing and publishing music, which made music easier and cheaper to disseminate widely. Music was given a concrete substance which was more easily saleable. As the technology of musical instruments made a wider variety of sounds possible, so the development of sonorous resources in general influenced the size of audiences that could be reached in one performance. However, this was not a unilinear process, for the demand for larger audiences in order to increase box-office revenues necessitated the development of larger sounds, larger musical forms (e.g. the symphony) and spectacular performances.<sup>1</sup>

Undoubtedly the most significant recent technological development for music has been the development of techniques of recording music and then of distributing it via radio and records - and today television. The revolutionary impact of these techniques has been the popularization of music. Following the train of thought of Walter Benjamin, it is probably accurate to say that the reproducibility of music destroys some of the aura of the 'live' performance, but music, unlike painting, has always been 'reproduced' - in performance. One does not revere the original musical

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1. See Alexander L. Ringer, "Musical Taste and the Industrial Syndrome" International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music, vol. V, no. 1, pp. 141-142.

performance as one does the original painting. But technical reproduction does remove music from the awesome venue of the concert-hall, or from the hysteria of the rock concert. Music can now be heard anywhere and under the most private circumstances, (e.g. with the use of headphones). To compensate for this partial loss of aura, music-lovers fetishize the quality of performance - and this need is also fulfilled by technology. Even Adorno, who once objected that a symphony broadcasted over the radio was no longer a symphony,<sup>1</sup> admitted later in his life that modern high-fidelity equipment is adequate to the demands of most music. However, sound reproduction has become an end in itself in contemporary society, as a glance at any hi-fi advertisement will reveal. Adorno pointed this out in relation to the fetishization of the quality of musical instruments, notably the cult which has developed around Stradivarius violins, which most people cannot really distinguish from a well-made modern violin. The reproducibility of music has made possible contradictions in musical life unprecedented in musical history. When else has society ever produced such a contrast as that between the sophisticated composer of elite 'electronic music' and the popular pianist who plays 'by ear' and who is not acquainted with even that most elementary technique, notation, because the availability of recordings has so completely formed his musical being?

The recording business, as an industry which needs to participate in commercial competition in order to survive, necessarily impresses its own nature upon musical production. Never before has musical production been as directly harnessed to economic production. The implications of this for music itself will be discussed later, but suffice it to say here that in the case of the reproduction of music, Adorno's criticism of Benjamin

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1. See T.W. Adorno, "A Social Critique of Radio Music", Kenyon Review, vol. VII, no. 2, (Spring, 1945): p.217.

has proved to be valid: technology tends to serve the culture industry rather than to revolutionize artistic production. Audience participation in radio has never reached radical effects, and anyone who has listened to a 'game-show' on radio or T.V. will know that audiences are more inclined to assist in the marketing of products to themselves than to learn a critical awareness of their social relation to these products! Even in the 'rock' business - the music of teenage rebellion - technology has provided the edge for competition between bands. The introduction of 'fuzz boxes', sustains, electronic devices on keyboards, the Moog synthesizer and, most of all, techniques for massive amplification, cannot be separated from the commercial advantage that these 'innovations' offered.

Adorno was more interested in 'technique' within the organization of musical material itself than in reproductive techniques. He wrote :

The word technique calls to mind the man-made factor [in music]; the word calls forth the image of a subject, regardless of its constitution and, at the same time, it evokes a feeling of the impetus of ability, success and function which are the purpose and goal of the organization involved in such a structure as the musical composition.<sup>1</sup>

The artist employs a technique in order to produce what Adorno called 'authentic' art, i.e. art which remains autonomous from ideological contamination and which therefore penetrates beyond appearances to real issues. However, in the process of technification, a dialectic exists between this 'authenticity' and an hermetic self-alienation of the composer. The latter is the result of extreme musical specialization and of an objectification of the musical means which becomes cut off from any relation

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1. T.W. Adorno, "Music and Technique", Telos 32 (Summer, 1977): p.79.

to musical content. Technique in avant-garde music is thus the essence of that which is 'portrayed' to the listener,<sup>1</sup> and for Adorno, this represented an extreme case of the domination of means over end. The music of, say, Boulez is totally rational and as such it has an 'aura' of authenticity. However, this authenticity is opposed by the fetishization of the musical means - a fetishization identical with that in popular culture. Within contemporary musical life, intellectuals who are fascinated more by mathematical procedures in music than by the sound of music have this in common with those pop artists whose main interest in their music is in amplifying it to extreme degrees!

## 2). Music and Class.

If the social relations of musical production are historically specific, is it also possible to say that people relate to the musical production process in 'classes'? Can one go so far as to say that the music of the ruling class today is the 'ruling' music? At first glance, it might appear that this is not at all the case - most of the music produced today is that of the 'masses': 'popular' music. Adorno, however, questioned whether there has ever been anything other than bourgeois music since the emergence of a middle class and the decline of feudalism.<sup>2</sup> The feudal peasantry, and later the proletariat, were impeded in their artistic production by the sheer necessity of devoting most of their energy to selling their labour-power. Composers were born into the petty-bourgeoisie

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1. T.W. Adorno, "Music and Technique", p. 83.

2. T.W. Adorno, Introduction to the Sociology of Music, ch. 4 "Classes and Strata", pp. 56-57.

or into their own musicians' guilds, e.g. as the sons of musicians - Mozart is a clear example. Today, so-called 'highbrow' music is produced by an elite for an elite, both contained within the bourgeois intelligentsia, and popular music - although consumed widely by all, including the working class - is marketed for profit accumulated by (bourgeois) capitalist owners. To this extent we may talk about a bourgeois musical 'hegemony', which includes not only the music produced but also those institutions, traditions and intellectual movements which organize and maintain the musical status quo. Musicology should not neglect to consider how universities, music education programmes, music teacher's societies, arts foundations, television and radio stations, and the recording business all contribute to maintaining musical interests as they are.

It should be pointed out in passing that the social fate of music, its reception, as is the case with art in general, cannot be predicted on the basis of the class of the composer or by the nature of the music. Chopin's music, for example, although essentially aristocratic in its manner, has become almost a mass item.<sup>1</sup> Conversely, Schoenberg, who was reactionary in his political commitments (or rather in his professed neutrality), produced a music which was highly critical.

Something not integrated, not entirely civilized, indeed hostile to confrontation, kept him outside the very order of which he was so uncritical.<sup>2</sup>

It is also dangerous to judge music by the political acclaim which it receives. Adorno pointed out that both Nazis and Communists condemned the

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1. T.W. Adorno, Introduction to the Sociology of Music, ch. 4 "Classes and Strata", p. 61.
  2. T.W. Adorno, Prisms (London: Neville Spearman, 1967): p. 151.

same music in pre-World War II Germany.<sup>1</sup> Today, officialdom frowns upon 'pop' music as the whim of licentious adolescence, whereas it is just this type of commodity-art which actually reinforces the mode of production which puts those officials in power.

There are some writers who have argued for an explicit and direct relationship between music and class. Cornelius Cardew, for example, has written that an artist's "real 'means of production'" is his audience and that all art or criticism which does not relate to the proletariat is therefore unimportant.<sup>2</sup> Capital, he says, monopolizes the access to audiences so that artists are merely wage-slaves: the objections of orchestral players to playing avant-garde music are symptomatic of the class struggle.<sup>3</sup>

Cardew refers repeatedly to the frustration which the "class-conscious proletariat"<sup>4</sup> feels with bourgeois music because it promotes images of bourgeois culture at its peak (in Classical and Romantic music), advertising bourgeois values and thus subverting the workers!

It hardly needs to be said that Cardew's sense of historical materialism is naive. Basically, his notion of class is one which has not been updated since Marx wrote Capital, and ignores that co-option of proletarian consciousness into the culture industry which has occurred in advanced capitalism. Commodity-exchange has a levelling tendency which has diminished (but not removed) class distinctions to a point where one can no longer talk unequivocally about the 'workers' or the 'bourgeoisie', and

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1. T.W. Adorno, Introduction to the Sociology of Music, p.65.
  2. Cornelius Cardew, Stockhausen Serves Imperialism (London: Latimer New Dimensions Ltd, 1974): p.7.
  3. Ibid., p.39.
  4. Ibid., see for example p.74.

Cardew's Marxism is therefore censurably "vulgar".

The concept of class is implicit in the work of those writers who have advocated 'realism' in music. Although Gyorgy Lukács wrote mainly about realism in literature, he did devote some attention to music, especially that of Béla Bartók.<sup>1</sup> His argument in favour of Bartók's music lacks musical specificity as a result of his lack of musical training, but it is nevertheless historically significant for musicology. He begins by setting the historical background to Bartók's music. After the failure of the 1848 Revolutions, Hungary developed a revolutionary artistic tradition parallel to that of Russia (unlike Germany, where the melancholy subjectivity of Brahms and Wagner was described by Thomas Mann as "power-protected intimacy").<sup>2</sup> While in Russia this tradition was expressed in large literary works - the 'realism' of Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy and others - in Hungary it was expressed in lyric poetry and music. However, the dominance of lyric poetry - in its private, personal expression - testified to the weakness of this radical movement, but music, specifically Bartók's music, had the advantage of achieving an "undetermined objectivization" of this same subjective attitude.<sup>3</sup> By this Lukács meant that, in the same way as art cannot reflect all of reality, so consciousness cannot perceive all of music. That part which is not consciously perceived remains within the realm of feeling and expression, which cannot be articulated in a (socially) determined manner. In Bartók's music, this undetermined objectivity makes possible an "exquisite typicalness",<sup>4</sup> embodied in that central figure of his stageworks and songs, the peasant, who is seen as a

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1. Gyorgy Lukács, "Béla Bartók (On the 25th Anniversary of His Death)", Bartók Studies ed. Todd Crow (Detroit: Information Coordinators, Inc., 1976).
  2. Ibid., p.204.
  3. Ibid., p.210.
  4. Ibid.

natural force which is transcendent over "the distorting effects of capitalist pseudo-culture".<sup>1</sup> This music, then, was for Lukács aligned to the world-historical force which he believed would bring the proletariat to political ascendancy; it was a 'reflection' of the future - of the process towards a 'classless society'.

Another spokesman for realism in music has been Sidney Finkelstein, whose argument - not having the theoretical backing that Lukács' argument has - is less persuasive. Like Lukács, Finkelstein offers examples of great art of the past as models for a revolutionary art in this century. He singles out several composers for their 'realism': Beethoven, Verdi, Tchaikowsky, Sibelius, Vaughan-Williams, Bartók and others. He saw Beethoven as the greatest realist, using in his work a human imagery which was the social product of his times.<sup>2</sup> Beethoven's only guiding principles, according to Finkelstein, were the conflicts and resolutions of real life, embodied in sonata form, which worked beyond conflict to a new clarity and renewed strength.

Both Finkelstein and Lukács were critical of modernism. Finkelstein saw Schoenberg's music as an intensification of Wagner's subjectivism and Stravinsky's music as an intensification of nationalism and primitivism, both of which were a withdrawal from the task of 'reflecting' life.<sup>3</sup> The avant-garde, he said, are by no means the misunderstood geniuses that they are often excused as, for their work is highly publicized even in reactionary conservatoires. Lukács' objections to modernism were more thoroughly reasoned. He saw Schoenberg's music as a modernized form of

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1. Gyorgy Lukács, "Béla Bartók (On the 25th Anniversary of His Death)", p. 212.
  2. Sidney Finkelstein, How Music Expresses Ideas (New York: International, 1952): pp. 58-60.
  3. Ibid., p. 95.

"power-protected intimacy",<sup>1</sup> decadent in its preclusion of any possibility for hope. Bartók, however, like Beethoven, never "withdrew his Ninth Symphony",<sup>2</sup> that musical expression of hope which probably still influences most Western composers today. Schoenberg, according to Lukács, avoided the determined elements of art, not by achieving an 'undetermined objectivity', but by retreating into formalism. Referring probably to the likes of Adorno, he wrote:

The liberalist opponents of fascism who uncritically accepted the universal validity of [Schoenberg's] shelter-particularism,<sup>3</sup> the 'power-protected intimacy' of new capitalism, with any and every innovation of form, quite naturally shrank from the truly great innovator [Bartók] whose truly revolutionary attitude blew up the human foundation underlying the merely formal innovations.<sup>4</sup>

Lukács concluded his argument by asserting that the Hungarian people must "base themselves ... on Bartók" in order to find "the truly progressive way to their national development".<sup>5</sup> Here Lukács inadvertently exposes the weakness in an argument which advocates art of the past for the needs of the modern proletariat - (the same can be said of Finkelstein): the proletariat is not interested in Bartók; nor do workers listen to Beethoven. In the face of Adorno's analysis of the 'culture industry', which is the real amusement of 'the people', Lukács and Finkelstein's advocacy of 'realism' fades into Idealism: 'realist' art quite simply fails to meet the real political demands of contemporary society. Adorno, writing as early as 1932, said of that music which draws on 'folk' heritage

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1. Gyorgy Lukács, "Béla Bartók (On the Anniversary of His Death", p.215.
  2. Ibid..
  3. Lukács is referring to Eisler's description of Schoenberg's music as expressing the feelings of people crowded in bomb shelters.
  4. Gyorgy Lukács, "Béla Bartók (On the Anniversary of His Death", p. 216..
  5. Ibid..

in order to combat the aesthetic demands of the status quo :

There is no longer any "folk" whose songs and games could be taken up and sublimated by art; the opening up of markets and the bourgeois process of rationalization have subordinated all society to bourgeois categories.<sup>1</sup>

That Lukács' advocacy of 'realistic' music as the weapon of the 'ascending' proletariat has been seen by some, e.g. Brecht, as impotent Idealism does not mean that music cannot be understood in relation to a concept of class. Adorno, writing later, suggested the direction in which musicology must look if it is to understand the 'class-equivalents' in musical consciousness :

Instead of searching for the musical expression of class standpoints, one will do better so to conceive the relation of music to the classes that any music will present the picture of antagonistic society as a whole - and will do it less in the language it speaks than in its inner structural composition.<sup>2</sup> (Emphasis added).

Before looking at that music which Adorno believed revealed the antagonisms in society, it is necessary to appreciate the extent to which commoditization traps music within ideology. The "annihilation of the relative autonomy of individuals" which is seen to diminish the clarity of class distinctions has been described above as the distinguishing feature of the 'culture industry'. This term has a broad application and is sometimes vaguely used. What is the relation of music to the 'culture industry'?

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1. T.W. Adorno, "On the Social Situation of Music", p.160.  
 2. T.W. Adorno, Introduction to the Sociology of Music, p.68.

### 3) The Music Industry.

It is popularly accepted today that music is a commodity - it is expected to sell. In fact, the saleability of music has even become a criterion in the popular evaluation of music: new music is said to be of no value if it doesn't 'catch on'. This fetishism is an expression of the distortion which occurs within every element of the musical process, from production to consumption, when music is exchanged on the basis of abstract value. Ironically, music, by virtue of its unpredictable relation to individual feelings and its apparent concern only for the 'beautiful', appears to be exempted from the mundanities of exchange, but it is this very appearance that gives to music its exchange-value, that makes it marketable within the established general mode of production.

The problem facing music today is not that it might become extinct because of vulgar economic concerns - after all, although orchestras and opera houses cannot balance their accounts today, it nevertheless seems likely that music is more a part of people's lives than ever before. Those who cannot afford hi-fi sets in their homes, radios in their cars or portable cassette tapes (which take music to even the most remote places), are exposed to 'Muzak' in supermarkets and subways. However, it is not for all to be able to participate in the process of making music, for music is hypostatized as a product, as though it were something only to be heard. As is the case with other commodities, it is only this 'finished product' which really matters in the music industry. Even the creative process is often avoided, for example in the common practice of arranging music. The entire process of musical production is geared to this final product as a means to realizing that ultimate goal, surplus-value. It is no wonder, then, that a writer such as Adorno should have resorted to such extreme

poetics as to have compared music which strives to be popular to a prostitute with her "skirt seductively raised".<sup>1</sup>

The emphasis on music as a product has led, amongst other factors, to the fetishization<sup>2</sup> of the performance of music. Listeners give exaggerated attention to 'how well' music is performed, and are little concerned with the significance to them of the music they hear. Thus the common response to avant-garde music is not "I don't understand" - which might be a valid self-indictment - but rather "You couldn't tell even if they did make a mistake!" This fetishization applies to both 'light' and 'serious' music. In both realms, cults of 'stardom' have developed and these are often based on performing ability. All performers strive to emulate an advanced performing standard which itself is never explained. (What does it mean to say that a pianist has a "feeling" for Chopin?) Musicology needs to include competent music criticism and to relate the standards applied to music in performance to the internal demands of the music itself. We expect a singer to project a 'beautifully rounded' vocal quality, but is it necessarily a demand of the music that it be sung in this way? The keyboard expert in a rock band is congratulated on handling several keyboards within one piece of music, but does the use of all this technology make musical sense? Clearly, the technical quality of performance has become hypostatized, separated from its integral relation to music itself.

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1. T.W. Adorno, "On the Social Situation of Music", p.132.
  2. An imbalance in favour of musicological studies benefitting performers was noted above in Lincoln Spiess' list of recommendations for research, e.g. in the preparation of performers' editions of music. Such an emphasis is evident even in a most recent handbook on musicology - Denis Stevens' Musicology: a Practical Guide (London: Macdonald Futura Publishers, 1980). Stevens takes the attitude that all that a performer needs to know is 'out there' - in the vast array of primary and secondary musicological sources. He therefore provides guidelines as to where and how to find this knowledge, and the core of his book deals with "Applied Musicology", i.e. its use to performers - mainly as an aid in interpreting musical editions. The only 'criticism' in Stevens' musicology is that of editorial decisions!

In 'serious' music, performing standards demand an iron discipline which makes a piece of music sound "complete from the very first note".<sup>1</sup> As a result the music doesn't sound as though it is being actively produced by human beings, especially if it has been recorded and its performers are not visible. That is, music becomes reified.<sup>2</sup> The authoritarian conductor-figure typifies the demand for this degree of discipline. In reality, however, competitive society often robs musicians of the adequate rehearsal time to give truly accurate performances. As a result, a performance is often considered adequate if all the notes are correct - if its facade hangs together.<sup>3</sup>

The most devastating effect of the commoditization of music has been that it has become standardized. The process of reification has penetrated to the very internal constitution of music, especially 'popular' music. In order to be guaranteed of the success of a new song, hit song-writers must conform to the formula which has previously been successful. As a result, most popular music displays a uniformity of sound comparable to the uniformity of any other mass-produced commodity: simple tonal harmonies and melodies, a lack of rhythm and an emphasis on 'beat', and a narrow selection of timbres. Most so-called radical 'innovations' in this music actually conform to the old formula too. For example, even the introduction of the electronic synthesizer has not led to any real innovations in rock music:

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1. T.W. Adorno, "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening", The Essential Frankfurt School Reader, ed. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Urizen Books, 1978): p.284.
  2. Adorno once recommended that music rehearsals be broadcast as this would present music as a process of production and resist the hypostatization of music as a mere product.
  3. This attitude to performance is particularly fatal when avant-garde music is being performed, because performers and conductors usually have neither the education nor the experience to provide an understanding of the music which is more than merely a grasp of the right notes.

its almost unlimited potential has never really been exploited and it is used instead to emulate conventional timbres and tonal harmonies. It is the standardization of popular music which secures the popularity of most guitarists or pianists who can play 'by ear' - who can pick out a tune in a moment and just 'fill in' an accompaniment - for it is the standards of these numbers which they have internalized completely, although they might appear to be creative improvisers.

Standardization is crucial to the technique by which popular music is distributed: 'plugging'. 'Plugging' is based on the principle that constant repetition breeds familiarity and that familiarity leads to requests for further repetition, setting up a circular pattern in which both distributor and consumer are satisfied. But plugging is not simply the predetermination of hits by the media, for hits must conform to the prevailing standards. Plugging is the enforcement of standardization for it is by these standards that the hits quickly become familiar. Paradoxically, the song hit must also have at least one feature by which it can be distinguished and yet it must also comply with all the trivial standards of other popular songs. Often this is a feature such as an unusual harmonic effect which appears to be quite resourceful until it is repeated mechanically verse after verse, irrespective of the sense of the text or of the surrounding music. Of course there are several extra-musical devices used in the plugging of music: the glamour of show-business, especially that of stardom with its stories of success and riches; fashions of clothing, hairstyles, language, etc; the jargon of popular music journalism. For example, Adorno identified a language of 'dependence' which includes baby-talk, affected simplicity and sweet sounds, by which the music business

persuades the socially alienated to seek security in music.<sup>1</sup>

One might ask why it is that people are so gullible as to continually 'choose' to hear what the music industry offers them. Lloyd Grossman, a knowledgeable writer on rock music, has decided that it is because people "just don't have very good taste".<sup>2</sup> This attitude betrays a naive faith that people have a real choice about the music they listen to. Adorno, by contrast, suggested that it is actually one of the aims of plugging to break down any resistance to the music which is offered or to the lack of choice which is offered, by "closing the avenues of escape from the ever-equal".<sup>3</sup> No amount of 'taste' would make it possible for people to choose song-hits which are substantially different or 'authentic', for such hits are not offered as possibilities.

What of 'serious' music and plugging? Adorno wrote that the "cheap deluxe sounds" of popular music have rendered serious music too "monochromatic" for the ears of most people,<sup>4</sup> but the business still capitalizes on the market that does exist for that serious music which can be reduced to a few basic standards. Christopher Ballantine has shown how the entire machinery of the marketing business has been employed to commoditize this music.<sup>5</sup> He describes the techniques by which the Reader's Digest has attempted to market a collection of records called "Music For You". Some of these techniques are common to all advertising. For example, a com-

1. T.W. Adorno, "On Popular Music", Studies in Philosophy and Social Science, vol. IX, no. I, p. 30.
2. Lloyd Grossman, A Social History of Rock Music (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1976): p. 12.
3. T.W. Adorno, "On Popular Music", p. 27.
4. T.W. Adorno, Introduction to the Sociology of Music, p. 102.
5. Christopher J. Ballantine, "Music to Forget", New Society (12 Feb 1970): p. 272.

petition for a prize is used, and this conveniently suggests that the universe is governed by chance, so that privilege - including that of the Digest's vested business interests - is accidental and unassailable. Music itself is made a privilege: 'property', which is 'bestowed' on the buyer. The illusion is created that fame and 'high culture' are easily accessible - through music. However, probably more important than these techniques are the ways in which music is actually devalued. Ballantine points out that compositions are proffered as 'tunes' which are easily arranged, like a "multi-purpose commodity", and which are also obscured by being related through the use of labels to 'moods' - "pre-ordained categories". Adorno has shown that the arranging of music is a typical feature of fetishization in that it betrays a total lack of respect for the unity of a work.<sup>1</sup> Isolated popular passages are made prominent and repeated over and over again, destroying the integrity of the original work - ostensibly for the sake of 'freshening up' the older music, which lacks the easy pleasures of popular music.

The fetishization of music is necessarily accompanied by what Adorno called a "regression of listening".<sup>2</sup> This regression occurs in relation to both light and serious music. Listening becomes non-conscious perception, a non-active process, and it is therefore at the mercy of advertising. This 'de-concentration' enables listeners to easily forget what they hear - which makes it possible for them to recognize it at a later hearing. Recognition, according to Adorno, is central to the regression in listening. Certainly,

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1. T.W. Adorno, "On the Fetish-Character of Music and the Regression of Listening", p. 282.
  2. See T.W. Adorno, "On the Fetish-Character of Music and the Regression of Listening".

recognition is important to some degree in all music: one must recognize the relation of a piece to other music, (e.g. in the use of tonality). But in 'serious' music, musical sense lies in what is 'new' and therefore unrecognizable, a relationship which is absent in popular music. Adorno has speculated that the process of recognition works like this.<sup>1</sup> Vague remembrance (which is provided for by the standardization of musical material) produces the (sudden) identification of a song. The listener identifies its title and probably the names of the performers or even the distributors. This identification produces a sense of socialization - integration into the community of 'fans' - but the listener's actual isolation remains unchanged. The recognition of music makes it more proprietary, property-like, so that it cannot be expropriated and is subject to the will of its 'owner', i.e. it can be recalled at any time. This is apparent in the popular habit of whistling a tune which has just been mentioned, and in those radio shows in which people compete to identify tunes. Finally, the gratification of ownership is psychologically transferred to the object itself, which is then seen as a 'good' song:

"I like this particular hit (because I know it)"!<sup>2</sup>

Because the 'totality' of popular music is standardized, listening concentrates on those details which are given emphasis - usually that feature which distinguishes a hit from all other hits. A similar attitude has developed to serious music, destroying the latter's dependence for musical sense on the totality of the relationships between details. Concert-goers insist on coming away from concerts with something for their money: a pretty new tune or at least a good feeling. As a result they

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1. T.W. Adorno, "On Popular Music", pp. 32-37

2. Ibid., p. 36.

listen to serious music with ears sharpened for recognizable details. This is what Adorno called 'quotation listening': people "listen to Beethoven's Fifth as if it were a set of quotations from Beethoven's Fifth".<sup>1</sup> As a result, of course, music is performed as a series of quotations too, emphasizing all the most familiar melodies and climaxes. When the general public 'understands' music, wrote Adorno, one can be sure that "they perceive really only a dead mould which they guard tenaciously as their unquestionable possession and which is lost precisely in that moment that it becomes a possession".<sup>2</sup> Since Viennese Classicism and expressive Romanticism have long since become household ornaments, along with popular music, Adorno concludes that "the philosophy of music is today possible only as the philosophy of modern music",<sup>3</sup> quite the opposite to traditional musicology, in which contemporary music often receives only token attention, and the music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries gets the most attention.

It is important to realise that the music industry, like 'free enterprise' as a whole, has the appearance of allowing infinite free choice on the part of consumers. Lloyd Grossman, for example, has written that it is not true that any trash can be made a hit, for pop is democratic: the consumer decides.<sup>4</sup> But the claim that the music industry provides only what the people want to listen to is ideological: it is as obscure as the 'law of supply and demand'. Not only does this appearance conceal the essence of the business - 'plugging' - but it "proceeds of necessity from

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1. T.W. Adorno, "A Social Critique of Radio Music", p. 214.
  2. T.W. Adorno, Philosophy of Modern Music (New York: Seabury Press, 1971): p. 9.
  3. Ibid.
  4. Lloyd Grossman, A Social History of Rock Music, p. 113.

the essence itself",<sup>1</sup> in that the appearance of individualism is necessary to conceal the liquidation of the individual which is the reality of the music industry today.

Musicology needs to look at why people choose to listen to the music produced by the culture industry. Apart from the fact that there is no other music accessible to them, Adorno points out that this music is nothing more than an 'after-image' of the rationalized, mechanized labour process which forms the daily experience of most fans.<sup>2</sup> Music is often to be found being used as a lubricant in that very work process: the ever-playing 'piped' music of workshops and factory floors. Popular music feeds an attitude of distraction and inattention, but this can only be understood within its social setting and not in terms of individual psychology. It is simultaneously an escape from boredom, but, because it is an escape from effort, it is also an escape into boredom.<sup>3</sup> Popular music is therefore an adjustment to the mechanisms of present-day life, largely through (rhythmical) obedience and emotional release.

The cult of the machine which is represented by unabating jazz beats involves a self-renunciation that cannot but take root in the form of a fluctuating uneasiness somewhere in the personality of the obedient. For the machine is an end in itself only under given social conditions, - where men are appendages of the machines on which they work. . . . [Meanwhile], music that permits its listeners the confession of their unhappiness reconciles them, by means of this 'release', to their social dependence.<sup>4</sup>

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1. T.W. Adorno, "On the Fetish-Character of Music and the Regression of Listening", p. 280.
  2. Max Horkheimer and T.W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, p. 137.
  3. T.W. Adorno, "On Popular Music", p. 38.
  4. Ibid., pp. 41-42.

Mass listening habits are not totally predictable; they are ambivalent in that people resist being told that they are dependent or that they are manipulated. The hatred which they feel for all those social forces which frustrate their spontaneity tends therefore to be turned against those critics who point out their dependency. There are always individuals who revolt against musical reification, but musicology needs to discern the extent to which their revolts actually "entangle them more deeply":<sup>1</sup> for example, contemporary 'punk-rockers' have succeeded as much in establishing a new conformity as in challenging the values of the status quo of popular music. A complete study of the music industry should relate audience's habits and responses (and performers' attitudes) to that 'authoritarian personality' which Adorno saw to be typical within capitalist societies. However, this cannot be achieved through verbal investigations, for the consciousnesses of people are so reified that their responses reveal only what the music business wants to hear - and not their real unconscious reactions.

Adorno's assessment of popular culture has been criticized for being snobbish. For example, he describes those 'folk' instruments, the guitar, ukelele, banjo and accordion, as "infantile" when compared with the piano.<sup>2</sup> He also criticizes popular music for being full of "mistakes" such as incorrect doublings.<sup>3</sup> Judgements such as these suggest that Adorno was himself appealing to some criteria, or standards, for organizing musical material. Graham Vulliamy has complained that too often critics, including Adorno, have consistently failed to appreciate that 'popular' culture cannot be judged according to the standards of 'serious' music.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Adorno, "On the Fetish-Character of Music and the Regression of Listening", p. 292.
  2. Ibid., p. 290.
  3. Ibid., p. 291
  4. Graham Vulliamy, "Music and the Mass Culture Debate", in J. Shepherd, P. Virden, G. Vulliamy and T. Wishart, Whose Music? A Sociology of Musical Languages (London: Latimer, 1977): p. 183.

They fail to recognize alternative musical criteria such as those deriving from Afro-American styles and Adorno's concept of standardization is to this extent a reification of the criteria of serious music.

Whatever faults there might be in Adorno's work, they are not of immediate concern here, where my intention is merely to point to the possible directions which study might take in a committed musicology. What is more important is that his work suggests a radically new way of looking at music and that as such it constitutes a critique of bourgeois musicology.

#### 4). Music as Negation.

A committed musicology cannot fail to ask how music contributes towards revolutionary praxis. Is there some means by which music can expose the contradictions in society, shattering the ideology which conceals reality? It is therefore one of the central tasks of musicology, through the analysis of history, society and music itself, to understand the historical limits which determine the extent to which music can transcend its ideological determinations and 'negate' the society in which it is produced. Clearly, no universal decisions can be made on this matter, for the historical nature of music is specific to both time and place: what might have been possible in the 1960's may no longer be viable, and what might still be appropriate in South Africa today may not be applicable in the U.S.A.

If music is to be 'negative', in what language is it to be composed? We have seen how the commoditization of music has reified the musical language with which most people are familiar, and because of its ideological function,

this familiar language is incapable of embodying a critical content. A 'critical' musical language needs in some way to be 'authentic', i.e. it needs to relate to the real processes of society and to avoid ideological obscuration, and to be free to do this it must bypass the culture industry. But how is this to be achieved?

Some writers have implied that music, on its own, is impotent. Among these, Brecht and Hanns Eisler are especially significant because of their explicit involvement with music as revolutionary praxis. Both Brecht and Eisler believed that music's political potential lies only in relation to a text, in the attitude which music adopts towards the subject of the text. In his epic theatre, Brecht used music merely as an epic prop, serving the drama as an estranging effect. He wrote :

It would be particularly useful in drama to have the actors play against the emotion which the music called forth.<sup>1</sup>

For Brecht, the experience of most music lacked that degree of distantiation from events which is necessary to critical thought. Even 'advanced' serious music, he said, made audiences the "involuntary victims of the unchecked lurchings of their emotions".<sup>2</sup> This point is dubious, especially as advanced music fails to reach most audiences; (although it is perhaps possible that in the 'age of technology', when T.V. and films are the common experiences of most people, single-medium art - e.g. 'pure' music - might no longer be an effective medium for critique).

1. Bertolt Brecht, "On the Use of Music in an Epic Theatre", Brecht on Theatre, ed. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964): p. 90. See also "On Gestic Music", *Ibid.*, pp. 104-106; and Walter Benjamin on Eisler, "The Author as Producer", p. 91.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

However, since the age of Plato, there has always been music which has been disapproved of for its subversive nature. This music has usually been that of the 'people', whether an oppressed majority (e.g. the secular folk music of the medieval peasantry, frowned upon by the church), or an oppressed minority (e.g. the music of American slaves - in which, wrote Marcuse, "the very life and death of black men and women are lived again").<sup>1</sup> Although it would seem, as Adorno has suggested, that the negative potential of folk music is no longer available in reified culture,<sup>2</sup> the official disapproval of popular music today would seem to testify to the contrary. Often it is not only the music that is frowned on by officialdom, but also the lyrics or the fashions and cults of behaviour which surround it. For example, in a letter to a conservative Afrikaans newspaper, a disappointed Pink Floyd fan writes of "Brick in the Wall" :

The singer wants to see the abolition of all social structure, education, self-control, discipline, etc! . . . I therefore decided to complain to the censorship board, but was pleased to discover that they had already banned the song.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the best example of a music which has always been controversial is jazz. Jazz has been popularly acclaimed as rebellious - 'off-beat' - but musicology needs to understand what gives it this quality. Francis Newton, in his chapter, "Jazz as protest" in The Jazz Scene,<sup>4</sup> gives an argument in favour of jazz as a 'negative' music. He begins by pointing out the

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1. H. Marcuse, Counter-Revolution and Revolt, p. 114.
  2. T.W. Adorno, "On the Social Situation of Music", p. 160.
  3. Die Hervormer (No. 7, Oct. 1980). Ironically, the writer goes on to say that he has concluded that the whole world is simply money-mad - an ideological exaggeration which actually includes an element of truth!
  4. Francis Newton, The Jazz Scene (New York:Da Capo Press, 1975): ch. 14.

empirical evidence of the protest content of jazz: not only has it always been considered outrageous and vulgar by the establishment but it has also almost always been advocated by left-wing radicals. Newton explains this by suggesting that jazz maintains an awareness of the flaws in society which have smothered the spontaneous, free soul of that "noble savage", the black minstrel, to whom jazz appeals. One of jazz's most subversive associations, according to Newton, was with the "poor man's church", which was always separate from and even opposed to the churches of the upper classes. The "unformalized and unritualized, spontaneous and collective" nature of jazz was akin to the "emotional fervour, moral enthusiasm and austerity" of fundamentalist Christianity:<sup>1</sup> both exalted the ways and the aspirations of the poor and the ignorant. The similarity between the techniques of gospel singers and jazz improvisation was therefore not fortuitous.

Adorno wrote extensively on jazz, formulating a critique which has become highly controversial. His criticism was based on an analysis of jazz's internal dimensions more than of its impact. He never denies that it bears traces of a rebellious attitude - for example in its characteristic syncopations, a disruption of the normalcy of even beats - but he asserts that this very contrariness has been integrated into a strict scheme: jazz has been styled down to the last detail. Syncopation is merely one of the standards of jazz: jazz pianists syncopate involuntarily, even when improvising. Because it is a new norm, the contrariness of syncopation is neutralized. This type of standardization, of course, caters to and is produced by the commercialization of jazz and as a result, offended jazz

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1. Francis Newton, The Jazz Scene, pp. 268-269.

fans are quick to point to jazz's improvisational features - but Adorno describes these as "mere frills" which are a limited and arbitrary sample of the real possibilities for improvisation, and which merely conform to norms.<sup>1</sup> This critique has understandably been highly unpopular, and it seems likely that Adorno was mainly concerned with the commercial variety of jazz produced by Tin Pan Alley, rather than the less popular jazz which retained its connections with black culture. Summing up the objections to Adorno's criticism of jazz, Gillian Rose writes that he was

. . . so insistent on looking at the form of music and not merely at the reactions to it that he failed to differentiate between the very different kinds of reactions aroused by different forms of jazz and popular music.<sup>2</sup>

Adorno was probably closer to the real reason why jazz is compromised as a political force in music when he pointed out that any ritual has an affirmative character if it accepts its fans into a "community of unfree equals".<sup>3</sup> Newton also makes this point: the poor to whom jazz is addressed are more inclined to sing about their oppression than to fight it.<sup>4</sup> Thus the blues is more often about private love situations than about social problems. Because jazz is vague about what it yearns for, it oscillates between being unpacifiable and being too easily pacified. In the latter phase of this oscillation, jazz is apologetic, assimilating the features of 'acceptable' serious music, e.g. in the use of formal clothes and bows, and this fawning attitude renders the former rebellious phase impotent.

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1. T.W. Adorno, "Perennial Fashion - Jazz", Prisms, p. 123.
  2. G. Rose, The Melancholy Science, p. 134.
  3. T.W. Adorno, "Perennial Fashion - Jazz", Prisms, p. 126.
  4. F. Newton, The Jazz Scene, p. 271.

Rock music today reveals a similar dialectic of protest and conformity. Like jazz, it too needs to be seen as internally differentiated between a serious minority of artists distinguished by their intention to create good music and the remainder of 'artists' who merely seek commercial success. Like good jazz, 'serious' rock has tried to distinguish itself from commercial music, but it has usually had to do so in the same way as 'high' culture distances itself from 'mass' culture. Sometimes this dissociation takes the form of a popular 'snobbery', especially in the sort of music journalism which frowns with distaste on the 'commercial scene', without admitting the criteria for its own 'good taste'. Vulliamy claims that this tendency must be seen in relation to the changing class composition of rock's audience: a shift towards upper-class youth, who "justify their likes in terms of the criteria of excellence used by other members of their status group".<sup>1</sup> Thus, in attempting to develop its negative potential, rock, too, sacrifices some of its political potency by adopting some of the values of the status quo.

The reification of musical language has forced composers to seek new techniques in order that their music can be what Adorno called 'authentic'. These techniques are not found merely in response to the search for new or different sounds (a theory which applies to all musical history and therefore explains very little): they are necessitated historically by the commoditization of music. One of the most revolutionary new ways of organizing music has been the use of 'twelve-tone technique', which, perhaps more than any other practice, has raised a popular debate over 'what music is'. Before considering avant-garde music further, it is

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1. G. Vulliamy, "Music and the Mass Culture Debate", p. 193.

necessary to point to the invalidity of this debate. There can be no absolute definition of music, for all art is historically specific, and behind the question "But is it music?" usually lies the bourgeois assumption of a narrow category labelled 'music'.

In his analysis of what he referred to as "modern music", Adorno gave his support to the Schoenberg school of composition because this music rebels against all demands but its own :

Its tone is that of correct consciousness of the reified alienation and depersonalization of all that which is imposed on humankind, in the final analysis, of the inability of the sensory powers to adjust to this imposition in any way. . . .Only through its image of dehumanization does new music preserve the image of that which is being lost: humanity.<sup>1</sup>

However, this music is not 'art for art's sake': as Adorno says, it "communicates through non-communication".<sup>2</sup> 'Modern music' negates society through refusing to cooperate with society. However, no music totally transcends its historical position, and serialized music displays within its internal organization the same pattern which it seeks to challenge in society. The total organization of music reflects the total organization of totalitarianism, which in turn reflects the total organization of monopoly capitalism.<sup>3</sup> Gillian Rose has pointed out that the same contradiction as occurs between those kinds of music which adapt to the prevalent mode of exchange and reception and music which resists that mode, occurs also within the latter kind of music.<sup>4</sup> In codifying his atonalism rigidly through the use of twelve-tone technique, Schoenberg

1. T.W. Adorno, "Music and the New Music: in Memory of Peter Suhrkamp", Telos 43 (Spring, 1980): pp. 129/130.
2. Ibid., p. 136.
3. F. Jameson, Marxism and Form: Twentieth Century Dialectical Theories of Literature (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971): p. 35.
4. G. Rose, The Melancholy Science, p. 131.

granted priority to the method of composing over its "critical relation to its material".<sup>1</sup> Adorno therefore concluded that, in order to be emancipated from tonality, 'modern music' must emancipate itself from twelve-tone technique by absorbing this technique into free and spontaneous composition.<sup>2</sup>

Another technique by which composers have sought 'authenticity' has been that of surrendering music to chance 'determinations': aleatoric music, as in the work of John Cage. Experimental music of this sort, as its name suggests, is exploratory: it explores the musical unknown and it proposes musical hypotheses. By doing this, it opens up wider possibilities of sound and destroys the rigid standards of meaning in popular music. Far from dictating emotions to passive audiences, which Brecht so hated, experimental music demands active participation: the boundaries between performers and audience become blurred. As a result, the relations of musical production are not restrictive, but allow equal opportunity for creative production (in contrast to capitalist economic production, which suppresses creativity and which denounces workers as congenitally uncreative or even stupid). Furthermore, in the mode of production of experimental music there is no 'final product' to be fetishized, nothing to grasp and to market as a commodity, for every rendering of a 'piece' is different.<sup>3</sup>

Highly rationalized avant-garde music in the tradition of Schoenberg, epitomized today by Pierre Boulez, is accurate in its reflection of the tyranny of contemporary society, but as such it merely reproduces the world

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1. G. Rose, The Melancholy Science, p. 136.
  2. Adorno, Philosophy of Modern Music, p. 115.
  3. See C.J. Ballantine, "Towards an Aesthetic of Experimental Music", Musical Quarterly, vol. LXIII, no. 2 (April, 1977).

as it is. On the other hand, the totally irrational music of the Cage school merely allows the world to be as it is. Christopher Ballantine has pointed out that these two schools represent extremes, the first of objectivity (culminating in computer-music), and the second of subjectivity (culminating in silence), and that it would be a more realistic image of society if music held both polarities together dialectically.<sup>1</sup> Ballantine suggests that it is Karlheinz Stockhausen who has achieved just such a balance - but without overcoming the isolation which stunts both extremes.

A committed musicology needs not only to discern the critical/negative moment in music, but also to assess its political effectiveness. It is an undeniable fact of Boulez, Stockhausen and Cage's music that it is only heard by small, intellectually elite audiences. However, it is necessary to distinguish between elitism and isolation in music. Radical music does not set out to be elite: it is 'isolated' as a result of the monopoly of the culture industry over the distribution of music and of the consequent predisposition of audiences. For example, it cannot be said of experimental music that it strives to avoid mass audiences - its political impotence is historically determined by the relations of production in capitalist society. Similarly, although music of the Boulez and Stockhausen schools does set out to avoid mass listening, this condition is also historically necessitated: reification forces 'authenticity' to shelter in hermetic alienation. The consequent impotence of radical music is evident in the fact that it is tolerated by the status quo: the State can even boast that it allows art the freedom to be radical, an ideological 'concession' which Marcuse described as "repressive tolerance!"<sup>2</sup>

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1. C.J. Ballantine, "Elite Music", New Society (13 November 1969): p. 781.
  2. See H. Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance", Critical Sociology ed. Paul Connerton, (Penguin Books, 1976).

Ballantine suggests that avant-garde music is the precondition for a new musical sensibility and that its future is "dependent on its amenability to a synthesis with its pop 'opposition'".<sup>1</sup> Popular music, unlike avant-garde music, he says, has humanized technology and thus avoided alienation. This attitude is reminiscent of that hope which Marcuse placed in the "cultural revolution" of the 1960s. However, the further stagnation of popular music since then - especially in mechanical 'disco' music and cultish 'punk rock' - has dampened these hopes. The following passage by Adorno is even more applicable today than it was when he wrote it in

1932 :

Music is under the same obligation as theory to reach out beyond the current consciousness of the masses. Theory, however, stands in a dialectic relation to praxis, upon which it makes demands and from which it also accepts demands; in the same manner, music which has achieved self-consciousness of its social function will enter into a dialectic relation to praxis. This is to be achieved not through the self-subordination of music to 'use' which it could do here and now only through definition of itself as a commodity and which would grant it only an illusion of immediacy, but rather by developing within music itself - in agreement with the state of social theory - all those elements whose objective is the overcoming of class domination. It might be possible - solely under the pressure of the immanent development of its problems - to invalidate basic bourgeois categories such as the creative personality and expression of the soul of this personality, the world of private feelings and its transfigured inwardness, setting in their place highly rational and transparent principles of construction. Even this music, however, would remain dependent upon bourgeois production processes and could not, consequently, be viewed as "classless" or the actual music of the future, but rather as music which fulfills its dialectic cognitive function most exactly.<sup>2</sup>

This passage sums up the predicament of music in the 1980s. Furthermore, it points to the invalidity of any prescriptions for a radical or pro-

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1. C.J. Ballantine, "Elite Music", p. 781.

2. T.W. Adorno, "On the Social Situation of Music", p. 131.

letarian 'music of the future', such as is found in the work of Lukács or Cardew. Is Adorno suggesting that in fact the historical fate of music (and therefore of musicology) today is that it is to be excluded from any real revolutionary praxis? I have pointed out in Chapter II that he has been criticized for being 'resigned'. Phil Slater, for example, writes that Adorno finds all that is not total revolution ideological and yet offers no aesthetic praxis.<sup>1</sup> This objection must be rejected as pure Idealism because of its refusal to acknowledge the historical impossibilities for art today. The alienation of modern music can only be corrected from within society where it originates and not from within music itself. In order to be critical, music needs to be impotent - for it can only intervene in the social process as a commodity and not as music per se.

I have drawn extensively on the work of Adorno, but it is not my intention to present his work as the only alternative for musicology. There are other ways in which he has been criticized, and while I cannot enter fully into these debates here, they should be mentioned. Firstly, it often appears from his language that Adorno fetishizes 'musical material': for example, in talking about Schoenberg's music, he writes that the composer was "respecting the music's intrinsic tendencies".<sup>2</sup> Language like this suggests that music has a life of its own, but what Adorno means is that social history crystallizes within the very material of music and that it is therefore expressed in the parallel history of musical technique. The compositional possibilities available to a composer are never infinite, for every individual musical effort is determined to some degree by the music-historical conjuncture in which it occurs. Serialism, for example,

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1. Phil Slater, "The Aesthetic Theory of the Frankfurt School", Working Papers in Cultural Studies 6 (Autumn, 1974): p. 196.
  2. Adorno, Prisms, p. 153.

was not an option open to Bach. The 'life' which Adorno attributes to music is therefore not an autonomous musical life but rather an historical social life.

Perhaps a more fundamental criticism of Adorno is that to advocate any art-form at all - as he recommended Schoenberg's music in preference to Stravinsky's - was Idealist, especially in his use of the words 'true' and 'authentic' to describe these works. Trevor Wishart writes that these words "imply an evaluative position for Adorno as critic which transcends the social situation"<sup>1</sup> and that criticism itself, like art, also needs to accept its relation to social processes. By advocating a specific cultural entity as "authentic", embodying "truth", Adorno might be seen to fall into the same trap as Lukács. Culture is no longer unified, and to advocate one "partial culture" is therefore simplistic.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, to advocate art irrespective of its social impact, or lack of impact as in this case, is also idealistic.

In attempting to divorce the value or meaning or truth etc. of a work of art from its value, meaning, truth, etc. to real people at a particular place and time, the cultural critic attempts to escape from, to 'transcend' his own class role, to avoid admitting that he is discussing what a work means to him as an intellectual (i.e. not as a member of the working classes), hence avoiding the admission of the (bourgeois) class basis of his position vis-a-vis the culture.<sup>3</sup>

Adorno, according to Wishart, implies that it is our responsibility to judge art against laws of meaningfulness and truth which are external to society, but Wishart concludes that art is only meaningful if it reaches the public.

1. Trevor Wishart, "On Radical Culture", in J. Shepherd et al, eds. Whose Music? p. 235.
2. Ibid., p. 236.
3. Ibid., p. 238.

While Wishart perhaps points to a danger in Adornian analysis, it is clear that he has not read Adorno's texts closely enough. I have already shown that Adorno was acutely aware of his relation as a critic to social processes, for example in his counter-argument to the accusation that he was 'resigned'. More important, it was central to Adorno's work to demonstrate the extent to which even the very likes and dislikes of audiences are administered or imposed. It is therefore not adequate, as Wishart has done, to conclude that music is meaningful only if it has meaning for the general public. One must surely go one step further and add that, in the light of the reification of 'public' consciousness, art cannot be 'meaningful' today. This perhaps must be the final conclusion of a committed musicology.

5). Music and its Effects.

An artist's real means of production, says Cornelius Cardew, is his audience; the end-product of an artist's work is not his art but its influence.<sup>1</sup> A 'committed' musicology's concern with music as revolutionary praxis immediately involves it with the effects of music. One cannot locate reactionary and progressive moments in music in mere theory: one has to investigate the effects of music in practice. As a result, it is in this field, the study of the effects of music, that empirical research has mainly been used in the sociology of music, e.g. in the work of Silbermann and in public opinion research. However, it is not adequate merely to register the appearances of musical life in order to discern the effects of

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1. C. Cardew, Stockhausen Serves Imperialism, p. 7

music. For example, it is not enough to assess music by the audience it attracts or by those who object to it - as Cardew does when he rejects experimental music because its audiences tend to be elite and because it is disliked by most students.<sup>1</sup> Public reactions are not a final source of knowledge, except in such 'administrative' research as is conducted by broadcasting corporations. Musicology needs to ascertain how far reactions are spontaneous and how far they are the product of methods of disseminating music and of the social structure as a whole.<sup>2</sup> In other words, musicology needs to do more than merely duplicate what it observes (in statistical analyses): it needs also to explain.

Perhaps the most important factor in studying the effects of music is experience: the subjective experience of music, for it is on the basis of this experience that listeners to music might or might not initiate social action. If one could determine how the experience of music relates to objective musical structures, one could glean some information on the function of music in society and on the revolutionary potential for music. Adorno once wrote that the problem of studying the psychological effect of music "is perhaps in reality the most important one in the social interpretation of music".<sup>3</sup> Of course, experience cannot be observed - it can only be reported subjectively and such reports are only primary data in musicology, for experience must be understood to be socially conditioned, i.e. some form of social interpretation is required. For example, it is conceivable that the gaps in the experience of music - the failure to hear or respond in certain ways (which will not be reported) - will in themselves be of

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1. C. Cardew, Stockhausen Serves Imperialism, p. 35.

2. G. Rose, The Melancholy Science, p. 97.

3. T.W. Adorno, "On the Social Situation of Music", pp. 163-164.

social significance.

The relation between the experience of music and the objective musical stimulus is parallel to that between 'false consciousness' or 'ideology' and reality. As Terry Eagleton has written :

A dominant ideological formation is constituted by a relatively coherent set of 'discourses' of values, representations and beliefs which, realised in certain material apparatuses and related to the structures of material production, so reflect the experiential relations of individual subjects to their social conditions as to guarantee those misperceptions of the 'real' which contribute to the reproduction of the dominant social relation.<sup>1</sup>

(Emphasis added).

Furthermore, the experience of art, probably because social processes tend to be focussed in art, is a particularly revealing means of access to the workings of ideology. Experience is never merely personal or totally socially determined; it manifests the dialectical interaction of an individual with his environment. In arguing for a social-psychology of musical experience as an important part of musicology, I am not suggesting that art should be 'psychologized' as it is in so much bourgeois art criticism, which gives little more than a paraphrase of the art itself. Nor am I suggesting that it is necessary to psychoanalyse composers in order to fully understand their music, for a composer's intentions, whether conscious or unconscious, are irrelevant to an audience's experience of the music itself.<sup>2</sup> What I am suggesting is that there is a point at which

1. T. Eagleton, Criticism and Ideology, p. 54.
2. There is, however, a case for arguing that music relates to social reality in a manner similar to that in which dreams relate to the unconscious, for both social reality and the unconscious lie beneath the mere appearances of phenomena. Ballantine, discussing quotation in music, suggests that "dreams deal with distortions in the person because of repression; music with distortions in society because of oppression". Christopher Ballantine, "Charles Ives and the Meaning of Quotation in Music", Musical Quarterly, vol. LXV, no. 2 (April, 1979): pp. 167-184. In this connection, it should be added that, in his Philosophy of Modern Music, Adorno emphasized that Schoenberg's music should be understood as a psychoanalytical case-study of the twentieth-century psyche. See Philosophy of Modern Music, p. 42.

the experience of music can be understood as an ideological distortion parallel to that distortion by which false consciousness misperceives reality, and as such it is a valuable means to understanding the ideological nature of musical life. In bourgeois society, subjectively reported experience testifies to the ideological function of music in that society. (One need only listen to foyer conversations during the interval of a symphony concert to hear such remarks as "Oh, that was too sombre and pessimistic for me!" or "Wasn't that wonderful? I feel quite exhilarated!") In bourgeois society, music fulfills an ever-increasing need to escape, to find in entertainment a satisfaction beyond immediate social reality. It does this "by means of a form of satisfaction which accepts and stabilizes the existing consciousness",<sup>1</sup> and this constitutes the ideological essence of bourgeois musical life: satisfaction or fulfillment is seemingly made possible without social transformation.

"An art-experience is worth your while only if it leads you to a difficult identification, some possibility in yourself different from what is customary in action or wish", say a group of American Gestalt psychologists.<sup>2</sup> If the experience of art is some form of satisfying pacification of the tension between individuals and social demands, does it serve only an ideological function? One could argue that the concretely sensuous experience and the emotional expression of art challenge and expose the sterility of social reality and this other possibility testifies to the contradictory function of art in society today. It would be simplistic to expect music to fall into categories labelled 'reactionary' and 'progressive', for one is more likely to discover that all music has attributes of both

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1. T.W. Adorno, "On the Social Situation of Music", p. 135.
  2. F.S. Perls, R. Hefferline and P. Goodman, Gestalt Therapy (Penguin Books, 1951): p. 158.

categories.

This dialectical truth is merely the starting point and not the conclusion of research, for it is not merely with the effects of music that a committed musicology is concerned but rather with the relationship between music and its effects. We need to know not only what the effects of music are, but how and why music has such effects. The answers to these questions lie in the fact that music, in its very internal organization, embodies a relation to that broader social organization of which audiences are a part. As Adorno suggested, musicology cannot be satisfied merely with music's external relationships to society: it must concern itself with "how society objectivates itself in works of art".<sup>1</sup> We need to relate the effects of music, as evident in the experience of music, to the kind of organization immanent in music, bearing in mind in whose interests it is so organized. Does music confront the underlying antinomies in society, does it challenge them, leave them as they are or even hide them,<sup>2</sup> and how does this relate to the experience of the music and to its function in society?

It is at this level of immanent organization that music's social character can be discerned. For example, Adorno sometimes described music as being either "totalitarian" or "free-collective" in character.<sup>3</sup> In the former, order is forced upon the elements of the music. In the latter, the musical 'subject' (evident in the individual tone, theme or solo instrument) develops from within itself and organizes the totality of the work. For

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1. T.W. Adorno, "Theses on the Sociology of Art", Working Papers in Cultural Studies 2 (Spring, 1972): p. 128.
  2. See Adorno's letter to Ernst Krenek, 30 September 1932, in T.W. Adorno and Ernst Krenek, Briefwechsel (1974): pp. 35-36. quoted in Rose, p. 110.
  3. See Ferenc Feher, "Negative Philosophy of Music - Positive Results", New German Critique 4 (Winter, 1975): p. 106.

example, in the music of Beethoven's middle period, the relationship between subject and object is revealed by Adorno to be a dialectical process of 'developing variation' and reprise, embodied in the development and recapitulation of sonata allegro form: the development represents an excursion of the subject into the "world of object"; the recapitulation is a reassertion of the subject.<sup>1</sup> It is this triumph of the subject, in contrast to the near-annihilation of the individual in advanced capitalist society, which makes this music by Beethoven so popular today, for it is experienced as something which has been lost and which can no longer be found, except perhaps in art.

It is appropriate at this point to ask of what relevance it might be to a committed musicology to study music of the past. After all, are we not primarily concerned with contemporary possibilities for social change? A partial answer to these questions lies in the fact that music of the past is still a large part of contemporary musical experience, and, more than that, that the specific nature of the contemporary experience of music of the past is such that it actually serves to obscure that music's real relation to society. (Consider again Ballantine's demonstration of the Reader's Digest's deliberate obscuration of music of the past). It is one of musicology's tasks to redeem this music, to discover its real significance in terms of its own era. To paraphrase Adorno, the purpose of musicology is "to contribute something to an authentic aesthetic experience" of works of the past through criticism of those works, in combat against the "neutralization of culture" whereby past works lose their relation to reality and to social praxis, and are constituted as objects of pure contemplation ("cultural goods"), thus losing simultaneously their aesthetic

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1. See Rose R. Subotnik, "Adorno's Diagnosis of Beethoven's Late Style: Early Symptom of a Fatal Condition", J A M S, vol. XXXIX, no. 2 (Summer, 1976) and C.J. Ballantine, "Beethoven, Hegel and Marx", Music Review 33 (1972): pp. 34-46.

import.<sup>1</sup> This, precisely, is Adorno's business in his analysis of Beethoven's Missa Solemnis, which, he says, "offers no justification for the admiration accorded it".<sup>2</sup> The same intention is self-evident in the title of his article "Bach Defended Against his Devotees",<sup>3</sup> in which Adorno claims that Bach is degraded by the sort of nostalgic listening which submits to the order of his music as to some form of divine security. Such listening turns Bach into ideology, concealing the spirit with which he rebelled against his office as a church composer.

Perhaps a more important reason for studying past music is that such studies serve our understanding of the present. The present soon becomes history and can in no way be separated from the past. The character of contemporary society can only be understood as the product of a social process which has occurred over centuries. Musicology needs therefore to understand music of the past as a cultural product in which is expressed a social process which is still on-going. Contemporary music is only fully understood, for example, through an understanding of (amongst other factors): music's origins in productive activity (rather than in natural, pre-social sources); music's alignment with the holders of power in slave and feudal societies (when music was seen to be divinely inspired, like kings themselves); the appearance of subjectivity in music with the decline of feudalism and the new emphasis on individuals as commerce flourished during the Renaissance; the expression of inter-individual competition in the thematic opposition of sonata form; the release of composers from patronage and the threat of enslavement to the growing market; the conse-

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1. T.W. Adorno, "Alienated Masterpiece: the Missa Solemnis", (1959) Telos 28 (Summer, 1976): p. 113.
  2. Ibid.
  3. Adorno, Prisms, pp. 133-146.

quent split between the functions of music for art and music for entertainment; the growing isolation of art as subjectivity was threatened by the market; the commercialization of entertainment music on the market; the emergence of national cultures in reaction to the oppression of minorities by imperialist states and as a result of inter-national competition; the destruction of sonata form through growing chromaticism, culminating in Wagner's organization of music on the basis of undeveloped repetition of leitmotifs (which catered to an early regression in listening); and the total isolation of subjectivity in Schoenberg's music, dialectically opposed by the pseudo-objectivity of Stravinsky's self-abnegating, ritualistic music.

It would be contrary to the aim of this paper to draw an ultimate conclusion, some wisdom upon which musicology might in future found itself in order to be "committed". Musicology's position today is contradictory. It is the field of a small number of intellectuals :

While all over the world poverty and hunger prevail,  
musicology takes the form of a hot-house luxury of  
an elite in a few countries.<sup>1</sup>

As music is trapped between being prostituted on the market and being isolated for the sake of 'authenticity', so musicology finds itself in a position of impotence today. And yet, while it is certain that musicologists themselves will not bring about social change - and it would be sheer

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1. Tibor Kneif, quoted by W.V. Blomster, "Sociology of Music: Adorno and Beyond", Telos 28 (Summer, 1976): p. 89.

Idealism to suppose that social structures could be transformed by such superstructural phenomena as musicology - they can contribute to the shattering of that ideology which promotes the established social order. Musicology can do this by analyzing past music and redeeming it from its current obscuration; by provocatively exposing the real social processes in musical life today and showing that these processes are also those that create inequalities and contradictions in other aspects of society today; and finally, by ascertaining those ways in which music itself can be critical, negative and ideology-shattering.

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